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THE VISION WE FORGET

A Layman's Reading of the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine

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By

PHILIP WHITWELL WILSON

Author of "The Christ We Forget," "The Church We Forget," etc.

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To my daughter

THEODORA

from whose picture Bible
I wrote this book

He who prepares for *the next war* is preparing the sheet of paper on which a new St. John will write the Apocalypse of our civilization.

—Maximilian Harden, *New York World.*
29th December, 1920.

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A Word to Explain

WHEN I wrote *The Christ We Forget* and *The Church We Forget,* I had only the usual distant acquaintance with *The Vision We Forget.* I was familiar with certain favourite passages in the Book of Revelation, but that was all. It was with a certain zest, therefore, that I began to read this book as a whole, with my own eyes and nobody else's, and I soon found that I was in touch with a supreme product, whatever more it may be, of the human mind. There are doubtless innumerable treatises on the Apocalypse which I ought to have studied, and I did try one or two, but I found them less interesting than the Book itself and sometimes more perplexing. On prophetic systems, any opinion from me would be valueless, but in John of Patmos I greet one who seems to have comprehended this world in which somehow I have to live. As a father to a child, he tells me how the Christ he remembered looks at things here and now—what part the Christ plays in our drama—what greater part He will play when the time comes. I have no idea how John came to put on paper much that I have read. All I know is that John's words are there. And the words fit facts.

Curiously, my young people have been more interested in this book, *The Vision We Forget,* than in either of the two that went before it. They like weaving interpretations around symbols. "I wonder," said

one of them, in mischief, "how you would have managed if John had made the number of the beast eight hundred and eighty and eight instead of six hundred and sixty and six!"—which shows that our theology was compatible with pleasant conversation. If it had been eight instead of six, I should have been hard put to it for a meaning, because six is accurately right and therefore obvious—it interprets itself; as does this whole Book; so that I have merely recorded the interpretation. Some people see in the Vision the God that was,—the fall of the Roman Empire; others see in it the God that ever will be—the return of Our Lord to reign; they must bear with me if—while respecting History and Prophecy—I write mainly of the Present, the God that is. To deal with prophetic cycles and ancient research, the Almighty has chosen suitable scholars, but I am a layman and a journalist and my allotted part is to find the Apocalypse in every morning's newspaper.

This, indeed, is what first startled and then amazed me. What would you say yourself if you were handed one day a document, undoubtedly written about two thousand years ago, in which you were not expecting to discover anything about the happenings of last week, and on reading it, as you would read for instance Homer, were suddenly to find in it curious yet exact descriptions of modern war, of recent revolutions, of the electric telegraph, of the women's movement, of the popular press, of the distributed Bible, pocket size, of Capital and Labour, of Catholics and Protestants, of scientific research, of the art of healing, of international peace,—in fact, of all that is characteristic, whether good or ill, in the Twentieth Century? Suppose that you also found aeroplanes described, with a

quite irresistible and hitherto incomprehensible accuracy, so that until aeroplanes were invented, nobody could imagine what the passage meant, while after they were invented, nobody could doubt that only aeroplanes were referred to—what then would you say? If you are a scientist, claiming to face phenomena fairly and squarely, why do you turn shy at this phenomenon? Do you think that the phenomenon will disappear, merely because you are trying to ignore it? It is only the fool who says in his heart that there is no God.

And I cannot believe that I am doing wrong when I read the Book of Revelation, even though there may be so many others more competent than I am to talk about it. I enjoy the Book—cannot help enjoying it—and it is enjoyment to discuss it. For, after all, John of Patmos had no dream or imagining that did not centre around the Person of the Redeemer. You cannot walk with John without also walking with Jesus of Nazareth. And, for this reason, I have inserted at the beginning of these pages, two tributes to the Son of Man, one written in 1881 and the other printed here, exactly forty years later. The first was my father's farewell letter to his workpeople, dictated just before he died. The second tribute is a poem, written at Easter, by a school friend of my daughter, at St. Agatha's, New York, three thousand miles from *Underfell,* in Kendal, where my father ended his days. Equally to these two—a sick man facing death and a brilliant young girl facing life—does the Christ of Patmos appeal; He is with us as centuries end and still with us as centuries begin; oceans and years do not divide us from Him, and " Revelation," is only seeing Him nearer Whom always we see.

WRITTEN ON THE THRESHOLD

Underfell, February 16th, 1881.

DEAR FRIENDS:

I have known many of you from thirty to forty years, and there are many who have come more recently, for whom I feel a true and warm friendship.

It has been a great sorrow to me to part from you all, and I should like to have taken a last leave, but it was utterly impossible. For some time hopes of recovery were held out, but since then my strength has failed so rapidly that it was impossible for me to undertake it.

Still, I cannot help wishing in some feeble way to express my best wishes for the welfare of each one of you from the oldest to the youngest. The experience of a life of nearly fifty years has taught me that this can only be attained by seeking to walk in the fear of God, and by trusting for salvation to the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for us. In looking back upon my past life, it is only in this way that I can hopefully look forward to the future to which I am hastening.

I have rejoiced in the cordiality and good feeling which has existed amongst us,—the expression of which, from you, has been a great cheer to me during the last few months of pain and trial.

I may say, in these days, when changes of religious opinion are so current, that I have found in the time of trouble nothing to rest upon but the love of God as shown to us in Christ.

I. WHITWELL WILSON.

"These are old wounds," He said,
"But of late they have troubled me."

* * * * * * *

Dear Lord, I know
The world's dark deeds

And mad ungovern'd passions
Cause Thee pain.
I see
Thy lovely careworn face o'ershadow'd
By a look of sorrow
When an unkind act is done.
I watch
Thy deeply pierced fever'd hands
Stretch forth to beg compassion
For an evil sin-dyed wanderer
Whose falseness hurt Thee sore.
Many, many are Thy burdens,
Comrade clothed in white,
For the works of evil
Wrought by our unheeding fingers
Rest in crushing weight
Upon Thy spirit. Weary,
Tired—eyes, dark-dimmed with grief—
Art Thou now,—bearing
Wrongs done by Thy children.
A prayer comes softly to my heart
As I see Thy low-bow'd head:
—Not to be
Patient, perfect and pure
As Thou;—for that were vain—
But only that I, one of the least,
May be not too great a care on Thee;
That in my blundering search
For light, I may not cause
Thee too deep pain; and that
Perhaps by some small act unplann'd,
I might bring Thee unexpected joy;
And so, for a fleeting instant,
Coolly soothe Thy troubled wounds.

WINIFRED SCOTT WALZ.

CHAPTER I

THE CHALLENGE

You will notice that, in advance of each chapter, there is inserted the passage from John's Vision which is to be interpreted. So familiar are the Letters to the Churches that they are omitted and you are here asked to consult your Bible. In the main, it may be said that every phrase and symbol of the Apocalypse has yielded a clear and constructive meaning for readers of a modern newspaper.

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.

* * * * * * *

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

* * * * * * *

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

—REVELATION 1:1–3; 22:18–21; 1:8–11.

I

THE CHALLENGE

AS I begin this book, there lies in front of me a cutting from an English newspaper. A delightful author, in jocular mood, says that he has never read the Revelation of St. John the Divine and has no intention of so doing. He jests gaily about the end of the world and pokes fun at the Prophet Daniel. I propose to take up his challenge and tell him what a fellow-journalist has found in the Visions which he ignores. The attitude of my friend is typical of a prevalent neglect of these and other "Scriptures" not in the world only but also in the Church. Years ago, Dean Alford complained that the Apocalypse is scarcely heard by Episcopalians at their services and here the Episcopalians do not stand alone. Experienced advisers warn me that I must not expect any great interest to be taken in this, my third little volume on "the Bible we forget." People with definite views will dislike these pages unless I give them definite dates. And other people are so afraid of prophetic dynamite that they leave the Vision severely alone. As my friend observes, a library of comment, criticism, controversy, and elucidation has been devoted to the Vision, and has it been worth while? That is the challenge which I have to meet.

A wise man has said, *Where there is no vision, the people perish.* And it is true. If to-day there is a

greater volume of misery in the world than ever before, if more children are fatherless and more wives made widows, it is because in our civilization there was no vision. The people did not know and there was nobody to tell them where they were going. John's Book was not written to make folk miserable. It was intended to save them from misery. He starts with the word, *Blessed,* and this word *Blessed* simply means happy. Any one who reads the Vision aloud to others will discover the path to happiness. Any one who sits quiet while the Book is read will also learn how to be happy. And happier still will be any one who keeps, who grips the sayings of this Book and makes them his own. Imagine then that you are sitting in some parlour or drawing-room of Sardis or Thyatira where the Christians found it convenient to gather and that some one with a clear voice is reciting from the tablets just received from the prisoner of Patmos. The questions asked by those early Christians will be your questions. The answer that satisfied them will satisfy men of every age. For ancient and modern are equally eternal. *The Time is at hand.*

A Vision that Inspires.

Even my friend will recognize that for melody of language, as translated into a thousand tongues, this Vision is unsurpassed. To ignore the Apocalypse would be to many of us as sad a loss in art as to ignore symphonies by Beethoven or concertos by Grieg. It was the Vision of John, linked with his own romance, that inspired Dante with that epic of the unseen which has formed Italy into a nation. To this Vision, Bernard of Clairvaux, like Blake, owes his noblest rhymes. Without this Vision, Milton could never have composed

his Paradise Lost. This Vision is the climax of Bunyan's allegories. Wedded to harmony, it sounds in the choruses of Handel and in anthems and hymns innumerable. Wedded to colour, it shines glorious on the canvas of Raphael, Michael Angelo and a multitude of painters. Pre-Raphaelites also — Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Ruskin—have revelled in the splendours of heaven unveiled, the sombre magnificence of hell, the second death and the lake of fire. There is no life without truth, however formidable the truth may be, and if the Apocalypse has appealed to the master-minds of music and literature, it is because master-minds are only master when they have courage to face both the best and the worst.

Tradition says that John of Patmos was the disciple whom Jesus loved. I cannot say for certain who John was nor can anybody else now living. But, for the moment, let me assume that the tradition is not always, merely because it is tradition, the reverse of the truth. I have found that in many ways tradition fits the facts. Here was one who, whether apostle or not, was a leader in the early Church. Yet he does not call himself apostle or even elder. He comes to us not as a dignitary but as a friend. He is a true son of his father Zebedee who in the old days by the Sea of Galilee worked not *over* but *with* the hired servants when they together mended the torn nets. It was as a companion in tribulation and a fellow-servant in Christ that John wrote to the saints. It was in his obedience that he penetrated eternity. While Peter and Paul had been winning the world for Christ, John had been one of those who also serve when they only stand and wait. Scarcely mentioned in the records of the spreading gospel, he had spent the best years of his life cherishing

the Mother of Our Lord as Our Lord Himself had cherished her. These final Visions were his long delayed reward—what he called his *kingdom and patience,* patience having conquered the kingdom.

The Child Language.

We think that temples and thrones and trades are the greatest things in the world. But the Virgin Mary could tell John how as a boy Our Lord needed but a day or two to look at these things. On the throne of Herod, He would not waste a glance, and an hour was enough for His discovery of the money-changers in the sanctuary. What occupied Our Lord for a quarter of a century of His short life was the wonder and mystery of an average home. Mary was the Matron who managed that home, and such was her influence over John that he learnt to tell of world events in words of one syllable. He employed not one symbol which a child could fail to understand. A lamp on a lampstand, a crown, a sword, a cloud, a key, horses, stars, trumpets, serpents, robes, rivers, a bride, streets, gates, walls, a lake—every one of these is common form in the nursery and in the fairy tale. That is why workmen in the middle ages, who could not read or write one word, were yet able to emblazon the Vision in the mosaics of their Cathedrals or carve the Last Judgment on the portals thereof. Instinctively John wrote as if you cannot enter the kingdom of prophecy except as a little child. We talk about eschatology and psychical research and post-millenarianism and then we wonder why miners and milliners will not sit through our sermons. Important matters should be put in simple terms—*Stop, Look, Listen,* for instance, at a railway crossing—for they mean *Life* or *Death.*

Written for Wage-earners.

It was as *a servant* of Jesus Christ that John wrote, and the audience that he wanted, so far from being confined to theologians or scholars or prophetical experts, was to consist also of other *servants*—people, that is, who teach merely in a Sunday school, who tend the unconscious sick, who put the babies to bed and, for fifty-two weeks in the year, cook the family dinner, seven days a week. Poets and philosophers often preach democracy to the leisured and learned classes. But this John was a democrat in very deed. His was no Elysium. He sat in no chair at Athens—Oxford—Harvard. Where Moses climbed Mount Pisgah and so surveyed the promised land, John was content with Patmos, never mentioned in Scriptures save this once, an island of disappointed hopes, his St. Helena. Here were miners who worked in salt—who were blinded by industrial hardship—wage-slaves without the wages, yet even to these men, John declared that heaven was open. Even they might be in Christ, Kings who could rule their circumstances and Priests who could enter the holiest. Mastery might be theirs and theirs also might be worship. No longer was history to be made in secret by a group of emperors and statesmen. To housemaids and clerks and unskilled labourers, history must justify herself. No longer were wars and persecutions to be an unchallenged ordinance of rulers. Mothers had a right to ask for what reason men seized the babes they bare and racked those innocent limbs and, on a thousand barren battle-fields, reduced the bodies of their sons to cannon-fodder.

Amid intellectual pretensions and Latinized verbiage, this lowliness of John's mind was revealed in the

very work which proclaimed his genius. It was from the Old Testament, to which some of us have risen superior, that he drew this pure water of humility. He had read how the dream of God, of which the interpretation was denied to wise men, astrologers, magicians and soothsayers, dawned clearly for a Jewish exile and captive whose very name, Daniel, had been paganized into Belteshazzar. Similarly, Amos was but a herdsman of Tekoa—a village as unknown except for him as Nazareth is unknown except for Christ—yet to Amos as to Daniel and David, the shepherd lad, service was the path to prophecy—the *Secret* of the Lord was with them who fear Him.

Life's Alphabet.

In John's days, as in our own, people lived in a hurry, with wretchedness and luxury surging around them, and their talk was of politics, ships, trade, fashion. In these matters, doubtless, they were highly instructed, but when it came to the art of *living* happily—to things like love and joy and peace—the wisest of that sophisticated age proved to be mere infants—just babes in Christ—who needed the sincere milk of the word rather than the strong meat of advanced thought. Hence John's first lesson—namely, a teaching of mere letters. Three times does he state that God is *Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End,*—the Author and the Finisher of our faith. So far as that, we can all follow his instructions. We cannot imagine other First Cause—other Creator than God. We cannot imagine other End of everything than God. The trouble has never been to recognize God as Alpha and God as Omega, but to read the name of God in the intermediate letters of the

Alphabet. God is Cause—yes; God is Result—again, yes; but how is God the Process? How does God justify the means to His Ends? How spell His goodness in the horror of Louvain and the atrocities of Armenia? In the Book of Ecclesiastes the case had been argued and the upshot had been pessimism. That was because the Preacher in Ecclesiastes limited his survey to events *under the sun,*—to happenings on the earth. John's range was wider—infinite—embracing heaven opened and hell unloosed—and his conclusion was victory. *The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all*—he wrote; a sufficient grace from Jesus Christ Who is all powerful Lord.

The Vision is thus not only a supreme work of art. It is also a triumph of the soul. John only saw these things because he had a day which he could call the Lord's day—a day devoted to the business of the Lord, and it was only in the right spirit that his eye was clear. Because he was humble, therefore, he was frank. Of what he saw, he held back nothing. His was an open heaven, openly arrived at, and it had nothing to fear from publicity. In an age when the oracle at Delphi, near by, and the Eleusinian mysteries were still a powerful delusion, John saw the Almighty, face to face. *Nothing,* he declared, *is shown to me that I may not show to you.* As generous men share wealth, so John shared insight.

New Woven from Old.

Because he was humble, therefore he was also scientific, recording only what he saw, neither more nor less. And for others than himself, he lays down the same exact rule. *Do not add to the Book,* says he, *and do not take away from it. On the one hand avoid*

your own dogmatic interpretations. On the other hand, do not explain things away. If you add, you will dwell amid the plagues here recorded and your days will be darkened thereby. In every clap of thunder, you will dread the end of the age. But if you subtract, you will miss your part in the great drama of life,—you will dwell outside of the Holy City—your face will be unlit by the radiance of the Throne. How perfect was John's diagnosis, first of those who have filled volumes with their notions of the Apocalypse and grown miserable thereby, and secondly of those who throw up the affair altogether and never sit by the River, under the shade of the Tree.

And there was another lesson that John learnt from the Mother of Our Lord and that was the Saviour's dependence on the Old Testament. I have here the usual *Oxford Helps to the Study of the Bible.* One of its features is a list of quotations from the *Old Testament* contained in the *New.* But when we come to the Apocalypse, the list suddenly terminates in this note:

> *The whole of this Book is a reflex of the prophetic visions of the Old Testament.*

And, again:

> *It is, therefore, full of references and allusions to the writings of Moses and the Prophets, too numerous to be tabulated. . . .*

Obliterate the Apocalypse, therefore, and you trample upon a noble literature that had been, as well as the noble literature that was to be. The seeds of which these Visions are the full blossom were sown in the agony of Egypt and Babylon and Syria. Not only

Daniel, but Ezekiel and Zechariah and the Psalmists hewed the stones by which was built this final and majestic edifice. The mind of John was perfect in its assimilation of the finest materials for genius. Lonely at Patmos, he had saints and angels for company. Poor, he dwelt amid jewels and gold. Humble, he consorted with kings and priests. Impotent, he moved armies, destroyed navies and rescued churches. Sinful, he was cleansed and declared the moral verdict of human history. Of all men of his time, he alone rose to an outlook, he alone scanned the horizon, which was adequate to the events already pending.

If in adversity he was content, if in sorrow he rejoiced, it was because his memory was furnished by accurate study of what was to him the only Bible. As a resource it did not fail him in the hour of utter need. Verses which perhaps he thought he had forgotten, came back to his recollection and fitted in with his theme, and no fragment that remained of his life's banquet was lost. It may be that with those verses you are yourself less familiar. Lest that should detract from your happiness, I have had the Vision printed in sections, or most of it, so that your memory may be refreshed, ere you proceed to the interpretation.

CHAPTER II

THE CATHEDRAL AND SEVEN CHAPELS

JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

* * * * * * *

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle.

His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;

And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are *the* angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are *the* seven churches.

—REVELATION 1: 4–7; 12–20.

II

THE CATHEDRAL AND SEVEN CHAPELS

WE are living in an era of Chaos when the World is out of joint and mind itself is disordered. Such chaos, like all things, must express itself, and in Art, therefore, we have Cubism and for a while Futurists flourish. Poets also, as impatient of rule as Painters, dash off verses which have neither rhyme nor sometimes reason, and we suppose that never in men's lives has there been so mad a moment. Yet our chaos is no more distracting than the upheaval which John had to face. Satire and cynicism ran rampant and moral restraints were unloosed. But, in John's case, the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters and the Art of the Apostle which would have been otherwise without form and void, was moulded like the Universe itself into an ordered Creation. He wrote a Book with a plan, and reduced even Anarchy to an exact science.

The Vision of John is best described as a Cathedral, of majestic outline, with a nave and a chancel, with deep crypts of death, with windows of blazing colour, with lofty spaces swept by the solemn tones of organ music. Pagan architecture was cold and classical, measured mechanically by arithmetic, but this edifice of the imagination lives like the Gothic of the medieval church in its finest vigour, being adorned with carven figures, buds and trees and beasts and fishes, with angels and apostles, and with devils for gargoyles. In

the noblest Gothic, we can trace the mark of the mason's chisel as it leaves the marble, and so here, the personal character of the man who was inspired to uprear the edifice is revealed through his handiwork. In the youthful years of John, what scenes had chiefly impressed his mind? They were two—first, that Lake of Galilee with its ships, its storms, its sunsets, its fisheries; and secondly, that Temple at Jerusalem, with its gold and incense and trumpets where he was well known as a friend of the chief priests. Now read your Book of Revelation and what do you find? Innumerable references, first, to a sea of glass, a sea of fire; to the plague that destroyed the fishes; to the ruin of shipping—and secondly, to the altar and other varied imagery of Jerusalem, to priests and incense, to trumpets and the atonement of sacrifice. And when John at last described the Holy City itself, what were the two things that again impressed him? *Why,* he exclaimed, *I can find no Temple herein, and there is no more sea.* He looked instinctively for the landmarks of his boyhood and found that they had vanished.

Christ in the Churches.

In this Cathedral of the Soul, as conceived by John, the poorest and the most ignorant were invited to worship. People were asking when there would be the City of God, the Millennium of Peace, the League of Nations, the perfect economic system. John's answer was to put all desirable systems into his last chapter and to begin a history of the future by forgetting politics and concentrating his mind on seven struggling little churches, too insignificant to be even mentioned in the annals of Imperial Rome. *City of God—golden streets—gates of pearl,—all these,* said he, *will*

come in God's good time. Plagues and trumpets and vials of wrath—these we will consider in a moment. The important thing for plain men and women to grasp first is that in the midst of the churches, with their failure and imperfection,—the actual churches of Philadelphia, Smyrna, and so on, where living people meet for present worship—Jesus Christ is still standing. Let newspapers discuss what happens in Parliaments and Conferences. To the disciple, Laodicea is the strategic point. The mission room is what matters,—the Baptist Chapel—the Abbey and the Minster. Politicians must have quick results—every election, they must promise the City Beautiful. The dust of every midday must be enlightened by a mirage of the desert. God plays the long game—working slowly, from the few and faithful, to the many and indifferent.

At Morning Prayer.

Not in the Palace, not in the College, did the Beatific Vision burst upon John's sight. On Sunday morning he was in church, like the rest of us, and his thoughts were wandering—so dull the sermon, so many the vacant pews. Brooding over the calamities around him, his face was to events and his back to the Christ, when suddenly behind him, the Voice sounded, and he had to turn right round—to see Jesus and Him alone. It was a great voice—as of a trumpet—it had to be—for amid the clangour of that civilization, even John would not have heard a still small Voice. Even John had to be aroused. Even John had to change his attitude.

In the Book of Esther, you read of the God that verily hideth Himself. Not once in those pages is His

providential name mentioned. In the Revelation, this hidden God stands forth, visible, and John, shading as it were his eyes, could scarce credit his senses. Who was this Person, so near him yet so radiant? *It is One,* he murmured, *like unto the Son of Man.* The very phrase suggests hesitation—questioning—a slow dim recognition. And no wonder. For here, as John gradually discovered, was no new Apparition, no fleeting Ghost of an excited imagination. For the Being Who thus appeared was none other than the Ancient of Days seen of Daniel,—none other than the Appearance, distantly discried by Ezekiel, when he contemplated afar off the sapphire throne. Here then was the Christ, at once, eternal and human,—Who wears our very nature on the throne—Who therefore can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities—Who is clad as our Great High Priest—has entered into the holiest place—and is there making for us His continual intercession. Here is the Creator Who governs not by force but by sympathy,—Who inflicts and Who tolerates no pain which He Himself does not share and suffer.

Yet not on the throne did John here see the Christ, nor yet—as later—seated in triumph amid cloud canopies,—with the sharp sickle in His almighty hand, —but standing again on this very earth, amid these our very candlesticks, so near, so deliberately on our level, that we can fall, as John did, at His very feet. We can look Him in the eyes, study His countenance, examine His raiment, hear His words, and even keep Him waiting, while in our slow and painful manner we write them down, either in books or on the tables of our memory. Others may be too busy to attend to us, but not He. In His utmost majesty, He is to the utmost a gracious and patient friend. To every hymn

He listens,—in every anthem His voice joins. Every prayer, every sermon interests Him. Every lesson to the young—every word of comfort to the old—catches His attention. Nothing that we attempt is to Him unimportant. No help that we ask is too great or too trivial for Him to give. The Christ that was is again the Christ of to-day.

A Portrait of the Ascended.

Of what appearance, then, was this radiant Being—He, the obscured God of man's present life? Others had seen Him but dimly; to John, He approached the nearer because John's mind was saturated, not only with memories of the Christ Who walked this earth—but with knowledge of the dynamic Bible—the Old Testament—which was Christ's only and sufficient library. In the portrait painted by the Apostle, prophecy and reminiscence are wondrously interwoven—the colours are drawn from Daniel and Ezekiel, but they clothe and adorn the personal Friend of Galilee. It was Christ in victory. Men had torn His vestments, cast lots for them, rent them asunder. Here stood He once more, arrayed gloriously from head to feet, in a garment unstained by history, untattered by war and revolution, perfect amid whirlwinds of human passion, so that when the tale of blood is told, the casualties counted, the ruins surveyed, the crime analyzed, men of all peoples confess *"At any rate, it was not His fault."* He still shines, clothed in righteousness.

His beating heart is bound firmly with a girdle—a girdle of gold—that sincere metal which defies alchemy and withstands acid—which is rare, yet indestructible—precious yet eternal—the girdle of truth. And His hairs, abundant with young life—*why,* said John, *they*

are white like wool! In astonishment, he repeats himself—*they are white,* he says, *as snow.* He Who had died when thirty-three years of age, Who had endured an eternity of pain, thus emerged everlasting in His experience, Ancient of Days in His wisdom. But His eyes were as a flame of fire—undimmed by age—unquenchable by hope deferred. Like fire, they warm, they encourage, they illuminate—making the crooked plain, so that by those eyes alone, men are guided; like fire, they burn—consume the dross—warn as a beacon—test the alloy, true from false—gold and silver, from wood hay stubble. Bring your theories, your philosophies, your ambitions, your politics, your pleasures,—whatever you dream, you hope, you desire,—bring these things under the eye of this Lord Christ, and what, precisely, will survive?

All who have seen this vision agree that His feet—pierced and rent by the nails—are now strong as burnished brass. Tortured and maltreated, this our Christ of to-day is no cripple—hampered in His progress. He needs no sandals of our devising—His influence is irresistible—His march along the highways of history is patient but unfaltering—His goings are established—tested by the furnace of fiery happenings, which leave Him unscathed. His bruised heel is restored.

The Universal Voice.

Of His voice, also, the testimony is unanimous. It sounded like many waters. In the stream that babbles by a village, a child may hear it. The sombre plunge of a fall in the solitude of some rock-bound chasm recalls his lonely vigils in the eternal hills. Niagara, roaring free and dashing from dark grottoes, where her forces are harnessed to the service of man, is in-

cluded in those many waters—which thunder in Biscay —which quietly lap the lazy islands of the corralled ocean. Waters symbolize the nations and the Voice of Christ touches all life at all points in all seasons of all climates—it is the universal wisdom—the international language of unchallengeable command.

Let the stars be seven—one hand of His is enough to hold them—the other is free to help, to uplift, to save, to strike. For His Power is inexhaustible, beyond all that we can ask or need. No weapon is His—for his very words are double-edged,—encouraging yet warning—assisting yet commanding—loving yet wrathful —a sword that pierces to the very bone and sinew. Bolshevism? What can artillery accomplish against Bolshevism? How fight men's thoughts with mere matter? How defeat propaganda with bullets? It is like bombarding the clouds and hurling a battering ram at the breezes. Bad words can only be answered by good words, and anti-Christ, by Christ Himself.

And His countenance shineth as the sun in His strength. Shineth, not frowneth,—the clear shining after a rain of tears—meaning happiness,—the joy of the Lord—that is His strength and ours. This incomparable leader is no pessimist—no critic—no satirical and disillusionized philosopher of failure—He is out to win. From Him flows the magic of courage and hope. He is the God of hope and the hope, therefore, of man. He is the big battalion. He is worth all other battalions. For the sun itself only shines as He shines when the sun shines in His strength.

The Christ Grips John.

Such was Christ; how did the clear sight of Him affect St. John the Divine—this holiest and best of

aged believers? *And when I saw Him,* says the Apostle, *I fell at His feet as one dead.* Yet how often John had seen Him! He was a person with Whom a nearer familiarity only bred a deeper reverence.

Fell as one dead! Fell headlong from whatever pinnacle of power or fame or pride or achievement or goodness on which he had been standing! Fell spontaneously and unresisting! Nor was it a new experience. Job had lived a righteous man, yet he also fell as one dead. *I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear,* wrote he, *but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.* Isaiah was the prophet of the Messiah and His evangel, yet even Isaiah, seeing the Lord in His Temple, high and lifted up, cried, *Woe is me, for I am undone.* There are men who travel uneasily from one land to another, everywhere finding grievances, everywhere exposing abuses, everywhere preaching revolt, but blaming the other fellow—the King, the Capitalist, the Bourgeoisie, the Conservative Trade Unionist,—any one, provided he be somebody else. Doubtless, as they say, environment is powerful; doubtless heredity does cling to us; but ultimately we are ourselves responsible, and ourselves masters of our fate. If we do not go to church, it is because of ourselves we are ashamed. We know that we need confession. More than any reform around us must always be the humble and the contrite heart within us. David conquered Jerusalem. David established social justice and knit together a league of tribes. Yet as a boy, he sang under the tyranny of the Philistines—*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want;* while as King—emancipator on a powerful and honoured throne, his psalm was—*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

Dead men tell no tales and preach no gospels. They who have fallen and shun religion, who like the publican beat the breast in despair nor lift the head, are doubtless nearer justification than Pharisees, but their contrition will not save mankind. The monk who in his cell lacerates an unruly flesh is self-centred even in his repentance, nor do his wounds heal the traveller by the roadside, who fell among thieves. To be buried in despair is suicide; to be buried with Christ is resurrection. Suddenly, John felt the grip on him of that strong right hand.

It was the same right hand that held the seven stars —the glowing witnesses and messengers of the seven churches—and John found out thereby that he also had a work to do.

Prophets and psalmists had played their part, patriarchs and kings had entered the annals of history, but the grasp of God on the churches was still as much as ever a grasp on each individual who goes to church. The Hand that held the seven stars was also laid upon John of Patmos.

As Christ rose from the dead, so must John write the Word that is alive for evermore. As Christ was arrayed in the seamless robe of an unstained purity, so would the saints wash their robes and appear with Him, clad royally as He, in the heavens where is God's throne. As the voice of Christ sounds like many waters, so will sound the song of the redeemed,—every word of God being echoed by the ultimate assent of mankind. John must write what he sees—only what he sees—not what he speculates, or thinks out, or imagines—but what he is shown. This is genius, and genius is here the Spirit of Jehovah—which is and was and ever will be, to the end.

CHAPTER III

FOR THOSE IN PERIL

HE that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

* * * * * * *

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

* * * * * * *

I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

* * * * * * *

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

* * * * * * *

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

* * * * * * *

—REVELATION 2-3: 22.

III

FOR THOSE IN PERIL

WE read these seven letters, if we read them at all, luxuriously, with the pleasant feel of limp Morocco leather between our fingers. We fail to realize what the rough tablets, scrawled with irregular Greek characters, meant to the little groups of Christians, meeting often in secret, as their strange contents were recited at some service, and again recited until every syllable was known by heart. We softly complain that the strain of reading the Bible is too much for our will-power in these days of emergent Paganism. What about those folk in Asia Minor, who had not one-tenth part of our educational advantages, to whom Hebrew was a foreign tongue, who yet were expected as recent converts to be familiar, more familiar than many of us are, with the old stories of Balaam and Balak and Jezebel? In the whole of this Vision there is not, I think, one reference to the myths of Greece and Rome, so perfect an instrument of warning and encouragement was the Jewish Bible found to be. The idea of winning these Laodiceans back to their first zeal by means of idolatrous displays was not entertained for an instant. As they became more and more lukewarm, so did the message become what we call narrower and narrower in its severity. You feel at

every point the stern yet skilful hand of the great Surgeon Who knows that to flatter a patient as to his condition is to betray him.

The authority of the Bible — its value as an instrument of counsel in the church—is emphasized also by a strange omission. Among these churches Paul had laboured for years. To the Ephesians he had written an Epistle which still survives. Yet Paul is not mentioned. The Church's one foundation is declared to be, unmistakably, Jesus Christ the Lord. The minister of the Gospel, however illustrious, must share that supreme heritage. Apollos also has disappeared,—and Silas,—and Timothy, first Bishop of Ephesus. Only by delicate and exquisite inference can we trace the continuing wisdom of the great Apostle. Paul's controversies with the Jews were justified years later by that terrible phrase *a synagogue of Satan* used by John. Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders that after his departing, grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock, is echoed by John's complaint against those which say they are apostles and are not, and are thus found liars; while, thirdly, we have a hint, even in Paul's day, that Laodicea was—as John put it—lukewarm. He wrote three epistles to these churches—to Ephesus,—to Colosse, hard by—and to Laodicea. Two of these epistles are carefully preserved. The third, to Laodicea, is lost—mislaid.

The Nicolaitanes.

A candlestick, as we shall see, is conservative; but the light thereon may shine more brightly with every age; and illuminate an ever-widening range of activity. Paul never mentioned Nicolaitanes or the woman Jezebel or Balaam or Balak. The era of John the Divine

in Patmos, like every era, had thus its own perils, its own need for counsel from the Eternal Christ. People have suggested that the Nicolaitanes must have been heretics, led astray by Nicolas, the deacon of Antioch. The idea is only guesswork, on which none can have any certainty. The Nicolaitanes stand forever undefined—the type of disciple that depends on man rather than God, on eloquence rather than the Spirit, on interpretation rather than the Word itself, on the clergyman and the preacher rather than the Christ Who was crucified and rose again. Any deed which substitutes Nicolas, whoever Nicolas may be, for the One Lord, is a deed hated of God.

The Woman, Jezebel.

Jezebel was in beauty and in wealth, as by birth, a queen in high society. Whatever Jezebel patronized, be it spiritualism or the Ouija board or card-playing for high stakes, became the vogue. Born in Zidon, her marriage with Ahab, King of Israel, was a match between Jew and Pagan. The husband listened to the prophet whom the wife would have slain. Before murdering Naboth for the sake of his vineyard he did at least hesitate. Men are brutes, but, if the worst is the corruption of the best, it is perhaps inevitable that uttermost loss of soul should be symbolized in the woman who mourned the death of her son by painting her face like a courtesan and tiring her hair. Among the humble folk of Thyatira, Jezebel was doubtless the one woman of position. Her limousine at the door—the rustle of her silk dress—her jewels—her money in the collection—they had to be "suffered." Somehow or other there had to be for Jezebel a special standard of conduct. Yet as her prototype was cast from the

window of the palace into the street, there to be food for dogs, so does the Almighty deal in every age with the long dynasty of ladyships who pet charlatans, play idly with intellectual and æsthetic prigs, dally with fortune tellers and wanderers in by-paths, while the poor and the needy starve and plot a futile revenge. For even Jezebel, with her painted face and false hair, must one day give answer to Him Who searches the hearts. All must know that, even for Jezebel, the popular applause, the photographs in the press, the descriptions of her dresses, the lists of her distinguished guests, will count for nothing but mental anguish,—will mean nothing but the death of her children—the ruin of the generation that ought to have arisen. She is John's first glimpse of the Scarlet Lady, riding on the Beast. It was in the Church that he had to face, first, the follies of fashion, which he found afterwards in the world at large.

Modern Idolatry.

For the Church, as for the People of Israel, there was arising a plain issue. Thousands of years before, this issue had brought the prophets Balaam and Moses into direct collision. In terms of the Israelite era, the issue was this—whether marriage should or should not be arranged between the worshippers of Jehovah and heathen Moabites; Balaam said yes, and Moses said no. Among the Asiatic Christians, what was essentially the same issue became a struggle between marriage, as ordained for the disciples, and a much less exacting relation, suggesting easy divorce and the destruction of all that is meant by home, by family, by domestic obligation. Even at this early date, we are able clearly to distinguish between marriage as insti-

tuted by Christ and marriage in a community which has become nominal in its Christianity.

Food sacrificed to idols is also a phrase of easy explanation. In the Gospels, there is but one banquet mentioned, at which Christ was not a guest; and that banquet cost John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, his head. At the marriage supper of Cana, in Galilee, at the picnics on the hillside, in the home at Bethany and in the upper room, the needs of the body were symbols of His grace, and He alone was magnified. Any dinner party which suggests the worship of wealth, the aggrandizement of pedigree, exclusiveness of caste, display of extravagance,—any such occasion means food sacrificed to idols. It matters not who is host, or who the hostess—the objective is idolatry. The result must be tribulation, social unrest, war and upheaval.

Take the church to which you belong. Then, in the silence of your room, think of that church until you hear those words of God, "*I know thy works.*" Manuscripts vary, but in our translation—*I know thy works*—is the preface to whatever else was said to the particular church. And knowing the works, God says not a syllable more about them. In His report, the building fund, the debt on the organ, the mortgage on the Sunday school, the architect's plans for a lady chapel, the choice of a pastor, do not appear, even by a hint. Labour, patience, an abhorrence of evil,—charity and service and faith—opportunity and environment and temptation,—these are the qualities—the circumstances which the Almighty analyzed and over which the Spirit brooded. Men and women and children, not bricks and mortar, were His concern—flesh and blood, not pews and ventilation and a corner site. In every

one of these letters, the values which appear as a rule in our ecclesiastical balance-sheets are ignored.

The Case of Laodicea.

I can find little support for our notion that membership of a church should be made easy and attractive. The one popular Church was Laodicea, and Laodicea was only fit to be spued out of the mouth of God. Effort, pain, risk, death were the inducements offered to those earliest converts, and the fate of Antipas, the martyr of Pergamos, proved that these grim words were fact.

To six out of seven of the Churches, the word was *Repent*—Change not your services, your methods, your ministers, so much as your hearts and your minds; and in the seventh Church—that of Smyrna,—the word, if not *repent,* was, at least, *hold fast.* That is not what newspapers or critics or speakers at conferences now say to the Churches, but it is what the Spirit says. That ugly word, fornication, which occurs so often in these pages, means the attempt to make the Church correspond with the world, to unite the cause of Christ with the customs and the selfishness of society, to despoil the marriage feast where He alone is Bridegroom.

Hence, there was needed for the Church a new and unusual name. What Jews call a synagogue and what we call a congregation means simply a gathering of people together. That is the idea behind a club, a conference, a trade union. But a church means something, expressed differently from this. Its members are people who have been called *away*—who have left something behind—who have come out of some city—who are separate and even peculiar. That is the

significance of the Greek term—*Ecclesia.* And in reading these letters, one has the mental picture of groups of soldiers, sitting through the night around the camp-fire, and receiving their final orders before going over the top. Their equipment is less important than their morale. And their morale depends upon the certainty of victory. Before the City of God rises in grandeur above the destinies of mankind, there must be the single combat, where each separate soldier does his bit; where the individual *overcomes.* Change of system—legislation—reform—yes; but loyalty and sacrifice first.

So must we now end our brief worship within those seven chapels of Asia which clung so closely to the sanctuary of the Most High. We have seen how from each we catch a glimpse of the Christ, gloriously arrayed before the throne. Each glimpse was imperfect, but there was one man among those churches who entered the sanctuary and saw the Christ in His complete majesty. And that man, John, sat lonely on Patmos.

Glimpses of the Ideal City.

Now, as we leave the seven chapels, let us glance, as it were, through the traceried windows, to the landscape beyond, seeing other glimpses, not this time of the Redeemer, but of the kingdom to be conquered,—of His ultimate triumph in the souls of men and in their societies. Once more, these glimpses are imperfect and fleeting—each no more than a hint of the whole prospect. Yet each hint, the truth. Piece together these hopes and ideals, and you begin dimly to perceive the final vision, the City of God.

Each little Asian Church added something to that

splendid and universal hope. What Ephesus saw afar off was the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. Smyrna perceived that even the second death would not harm the Saints. Pergamos realized that in the golden city, each of the blessed would retain unimpaired his individuality,—which would be sustained by manna, hidden from all others,—and guaranteed by the white stone of a signet, with a new name, known only to him to whom it belongs. Thyatira learnt that however feeble in numbers and influence might be her disciples now, the day would surely dawn when to them alone would be entrusted power—that nations would be shivered in pieces except as they became Christian nations,—and that the star of Bethlehem is a morning, not an evening star, heralding not the night, but the day.

Three blessings follow, each more intimate than the last, as if the voice of a trumpet were becoming a whisper in the ear. Sardis was told of the saints in white robes, their names in the Book of Life, not to be challenged by ecclesiastic or theologian,—names confessed by Christ Himself before God and the angels. Philadelphia was thrilled with the certain hope that the pillar of the Church would be, neither money nor political prestige, but any man within the Church who is faithful to the One Lord of the Church. And that man would be stamped with the name of God Himself. In him would be embodied whatever is meant by the City of God. In that man the name of Christ Himself would have a new meaning. Through that man more would be seen in Christ than had yet been revealed.

But it was to the lukewarm Laodiceans, that, in full and final measure, the love of Christ was poured forth, with an abundance which suggests that however prod-

igal may have been the sinner, in the parable, far more prodigal was the Friend of Sinners. *Never mind the Church*—it is as if He said—*it may be lukewarm. But behold I stand at the door and knock. If any one man open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me. And whatever throne be mine, on that throne also shall he sit with me.* As the Church tottered and fell, so did He hold firm to all who were His.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAMPS THAT SHINE

AS many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

—REVELATION 3: 19, 20.

IV

THE LAMPS THAT SHINE

ON his long search for the City of God, John started from the precise point where we stand. The fact which drove him forth was our fact, namely failure, not alone the failure of civilization but the failure of organized religion itself. While we spend millions on surveys and enquiries and publish elaborate reports with statistical diagrams, John's probe—to use a delightful expression—was simpler. How men and women estimate the churches is doubtless important, but much more important is what God thinks of them. What we should have written in many volumes, John explained in a few pages, nor did he select the largest churches only for his scrutiny. To him, little Sardis was just as well worth attention as the more conspicuous Ephesus. Congregations might differ from one another in size and wealth but not in the love that was set upon them. The humble conventicle in the village away up the remote valley was as dear to the Eternal as the prominent pulpit on a world famous avenue or fashionable square.

Essentially, John's idea of a church was conservative—not the headlamp of an automobile in full career, but a candlestick or lampstand, upright as a lighthouse amid surging currents. The candlestick was made of gold—costliest of all metals and unalloyed. For the Church, nothing was to be reckoned too valuable—no window too beautiful—no picture too rare—no music

too glorious—no jewels too splendid for chalice or altar. Yet in itself the candlestick, however gorgeous, as in Spain, can give no light. Without Christ, they could do nothing. Indeed, the trouble has never been with the candlestick. In the Christian, as in other religions, there is always money available for an ornate display. But what about the lamp on the lampstand? Oil for the lamp is apt to be forgotten. The flame flickers in the breeze. Scriptures are neglected, and when the light goes out the golden candlestick is itself engulfed in the surrounding darkness. Museums are crowded with ecclesiastical furniture which has become merely curious. Landscapes are littered with churches where prayer will be heard no more. In London places of worship often disappear or become warehouses or even adjuncts for breweries. The candlestick, as at Ephesus, is removed out of its place.

The Failure of "Attractions."

That removal is the act of God Himself. He alone holds fast those stars and no one can pluck them out of His hand. Churches may be disestablished and disendowed, may lose their privileges, or like the Churches in Asia, have no privileges to lose. Nonconforming ministers may be driven into exile, and Covenanters onto the slopes of mountains. But, like Smyrna, to this very day, they can overcome,—win the battle,—and the prize. But not, I think, by any mere artifice—movies—sensation—advertisement. So far from urging his friends to keep up with the times, John's teaching tended the other way. *Do the first works,* he said, *remember whence thou art fallen; be faithful; hold fast till Christ comes; be watchful and strengthen the things that remain; let no man take thy crown*—haul

down thy flag. The Christians were thus a garrison standing siege. Their danger was from lukewarm friends within the fortress. What they had to fear was the warriors who were less than one hundred per cent.

When in these days churches languish, we blame the minister. Not so John. He does not trouble even to give the name of the *angel* or missionary to each of these seven churches. Eloquent or dull, famous or obscure, the man is of no more significance than the postman who brings you a letter. Having delivered precisely that message which was committed to him, the minister's duty is fulfilled. The whole responsibility then devolves upon the congregation. Of numbers, we are told nothing—it may have been a hundred or a thousand—what matter? The only question is whether in that crowd there is even one man or woman who has ears to hear—not the words of a man at all—but *what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* For each of the seven Societies, this rule is separately stated, and in identical terms. It thus becomes a rule of universal applicaton. Be the church large or small, fashionable or socialist, that man who listens—that woman who hears—alone counts. If the rest are deaf, it is not the preacher's fault unless he fails to deliver the appointed gospel. People were also deaf to Him Who spoke as did none other. He also had to seek painfully for the listener who had ears to hear. And John was careful to utter no word for these churches which could not be put direct into the mouth of Christ—the First Person Singular—Jehovah, I Am.

The Varied Vision.

For the Moslems in all lands, Mahomet has one message. The Roman Mass is also a world-wide act of

uniformity. Not so with these letters to the Churches. In the first chapter of his Apocalypse, John saw Christ as a whole, from His face to His feet. But now we have the blessed Body of Our Lord broken for us, and freely given in distributed fragments to each Church, according to the people's need. Every such gift is authentic—proven—familiar. If Christ walks among the candlesticks, it is to give us actually of His very Self. Note how the original description of Him in Chapter One is repeated in the succeeding chapters. At Ephesus, they had lost that first love which Paul compared with the devotion of husband for wife, and to the Ephesians, therefore, Christ is just Himself—present—and enough. Smyrna must endure persecution, and to her, Christ comes as the One Who, though dead, now lives—Who has conquered pain and the tomb. Pergamos was rent by controversy, and Christ there appears with two edged sword—with words of cold steel—which like the surgeon's lancet cut in order to save. Thyatira has a touch of worldliness and she must meet Christ with His eyes of flame—His feet of brass; must know Christ as the judge of fashion—the conqueror of drawing-rooms. To the formalists of Sardis, Christ came as Spirit—to be received without symbol or ceremony — so awakening the dead. Troubled by Jews, Philadelphia found in Christ the Key of David,—the clue to Hebrew annals—the door which, once opened to Gentiles, could never again be shut. And Laodicea, lukewarm, had to face Christ as a faithful witness, not to be trifled with,—the Amen, appeal against Whose final judgment is unthinkable.

If then this vision of John can be likened unto a cathedral, built nobly for the worship of all good things and splendid purposes, then, as it seems to me,

these seven letters to the churches are as the chapels which cluster around the inner sanctuary. These ancient yet eternal chantries of the soul we may enter, one by one, and there humbly kneel in the very company of those earliest martyrs who lived and died for the cause of the Redeemer. From no single chapel can we see all that Christ is to the world, but, from each, if we looked through lofty arch and pillared aisle, we can catch a glimpse of His glorious Person, radiant amidst all the communions that ever were, that are or ever will be. The men of Smyrna do not see the Christ as the Christ is seen by the men of Sardis, but neither Sardis nor Smyrna dare deny that Christ is one and the same for all—that all His messages are bound indivisible in the one volume of the Book that is written. Nor will His majesty be fully revealed until all that is found in Him by all men, east and west, Koreans, Chinese, Brazilians and Americans, is blended into one portrait—preëxistent to mankind itself—and even so, inexhaustible.

CHAPTER V

SUNRISE OVER PATMOS

AFTER this I looked, and behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him;* and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

—REVELATION 4: 1–11.

V

SUNRISE OVER PATMOS

IN the island of Patmos, they still show you the grotto from which they say that John saw God. He had suffered an uneasy night and was so worn out that tears came quickly. It was a shock to hear that a church, so prosperous as Laodicea, was only fit to be spued out of the mouth of the Almighty. Not only had John expected a kingdom on earth, but he had hoped for a chief place within it. As a boy, he and his brother James had seen Jesus with their very eyes, and Jesus—rather after the manner of David in his dealings with the masterful Sons of Zeruiah—had nicknamed them, Boanerges, the sons of thunder. But years ago, James had been murdered by Herod and nobody was left to care. John had survived every one and the only reward was Patmos.

As a lad, he had heard in the synagogue of Isaiah. That prophet had outlived the great reign of King Uzziah. For fifty-two years, more than half a century, the Philistines had been defeated, and after them, the Arabians, while the Ammonites brought gifts and Egypt learnt to respect Judah. Jerusalem had been fortified. Towers had been built and wells digged in the desert. Husbandry was encouraged and an army had been trained and equipped with the latest weapons and engines of war. It was imperialism at its best. Yet no King—no Kaiser ever died a more shameful

death. Blasphemously claiming divine right, Uzziah had approached the altar, not as penitent but as priest, and had been smitten with leprosy. And it was in the very year of gloom when he died that Isaiah, the disillusioned, saw God. This was what John recalled—how a proud king might be rejected while a poor prophet was ever welcome.

Sitting there in his grotto he would have been the last to compare himself either with Isaiah or with Moses, on the mount. Yet he saw more of God than either. In the long hours of darkness, he had descried the distant lights of villages and towns and had remembered how Christ had said that His Churches should be lamps on a lampstand. With the dawn, he had picked out the morning star that shone over Thyatira, and this dawn of a new day over old Rome, this coming of a new era of education and progress and thought, seemed to dim the ecclesiastical candles, so essential to a dark age, till one by one they flickered out.

The Salvation of Genius.

Many a man, so disillusioned, has drifted into cynicism and luxury and crime. Many another has fallen prey to some cult, strange, yet soon found to be arid. Many leave the churches, never to darken again their doors, and when the imposing structure of Catholicism comes crashing to the ground, little is usually left but rationalism and a citizenship liberated from "the superstitions" of religion. From fates so common, it was Christ Who rescued John. Even of Genius in exile, as Dante discovered, is He the Saviour. With the voice of a trumpet as at the first, He spoke again to John, and John though overwrought and hysterical

with the worry and stress of life, while he wept much, did not despair or curse God ere he died.

Fishermen, watching that sunrise, remarked only on the weather. They heard the thunder, saw the lightning and by the rainbow knew of the rain. It was Christ Who in His love changed that tempestuous dawn for John into a vision of the Eternal. Within those clouds was a door opened into heaven itself. Let every church disappear and there is still in the Spirit an access to happiness. And there is also an invitation, from the Saviour Himself, *Come up hither.* Let us suppose that all the seven angels to the seven churches are silent, then He still speaks, saying, *I will shew thee.* And the ocean which separates us from friends and country becomes a sea of glass, clear as crystal, on which we can walk in faith, as did Peter, no power on earth preventing us. Surrounded by circumstance, John was suddenly as free as the airman to soar and travel where he was led. He was to be taught of the things that must be hereafter, a lesson that has been in all times perilous to the saints. For John, it was safe and it was helpful because his education began, continued and ended in God Himself. John touches events and dates, but in events and dates, he is far less interested than he is in the Omnipotent and the Eternal, who determines dates and events. Many and many a time does he emerge from the maelstroms of history in order to witness again the majesty of Him on the throne, and only as he satisfied himself constantly that God was really in His heaven, did he have faith to know that all's right with the world.

The Scars of Calvary.

What difference does it make to the sunrise if we

have our revolutions and upheavals? That celestial glory which shone so clearly around John was radiant demonstration that God had not abdicated. Still on the throne sat the supreme Sovereign. The very storms that broke across the sky, the lightning and the thunder and the hail, only disclosed the rainbow of covenant, eternal since Noah. Let the tempests drift slow chaos across the Sun, and the rainbow of covenant was still held firm in its ambit by the chains of light and of love. It was a rainbow of emerald,—not a dark Providence, but a surrounding loveliness to common life, constant yet beautiful.

And within was God as a jasper stone, of a varied colour, for God is variously seen of men, but flecked particularly with the challenging red of the sardius, red as blood, the scars of Calvary struck upon the sky itself. At first, it was to John merely a sardius stone, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, he saw that what had seemed to him a streak of crimson was in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain. At the very centre of all the power and the glory is the love that dies.

Even those churches which had seemed such a failure,—even they added to the landscape. Knock down the lampstands, overturn the monasteries, sell your sanctuary to the highest bidder, and there still burns before the throne all that makes a church worth while, namely the sevenfold Spirit of the Eternal. You may destroy religion but you cannot quench that Flame, not even in blood. Beyond all churches reigns the Christ.

The Four and Twenty Elders.

And with Christ, the four and twenty elders. Organizations may fail, but great men endure. Built on

Law, Jerusalem may lie as desolate as Laodicea, saved by Grace, but Isaiah of Jerusalem reigns as securely as Paul of Laodicea. Athens may decay, but Plato and Socrates are immortal. White as the snow that caps the mountains are the robes of those four and twenty elders, and golden as the rays that touch the topmost peaks are the crowns of authority and honour that adorn their brows. Let Presbyterians be ever so lukewarm, they cannot dethrone John Knox. Let Quakers be ever so worldly, there remains George Fox. No one has displaced Moses and Abraham and Elijah. All the good in man that has ever been is everlasting, and throughout the Vision those elders are seen at intervals, sitting serene amid world upheavals, until all are absorbed in the final Democracy.

The Four Beasts.

So much for the Humanities. But around the throne of God, there are also ranged the achievements of Science. This our God, revealed in Christ as the Living Word, is no obscurantist, surviving in the twilight of ignorance and superstition. His audience chamber is guarded by living creatures, four in number, equipped with eyes, before and behind, indeed full of eyes, dissecting, analyzing, calculating, photographing, recording. Such eyes are the microscope for the minute and the telescope for the distant and the mysterious rays of unseeable light whereby the metal is discovered within the rock and the bone of man and beast within the garment of muscle. Call to witness the lion in his strength, or the calf in his weakness or the man with his intelligence or the eagle with his movement, and all will render praise to Him Who created all.

That John remembered the vision of Isaiah is no fancy of mine. It is proved by the fact that he, as did Isaiah, saw the living creatures, each with six wings. Isaiah tells us that, with twain, he covered his face, which is reverence; with twain, he covered his feet, which is humility; and with twain, he did fly, which is service. Mere activity in however good a cause is not enough. There is no goodness without worship of the good and the good is God. The song of the seraphs which Isaiah heard does not cease as centuries roll on. If knowledge grows from more to more, it only means that more of reverence in us dwells. *Holy, Holy, Holy* was the word that they uttered to Isaiah. And, day and night, *Holy, Holy, Holy* is the message to John. Not with Jesus began the Trinity; all that God is, has been eternal. All that He is, He ever will be. As Father, He is holy; as Son, He is holy; and holy is He as Spirit.

In such a Presence, there was no distinction drawn between those four and twenty elders. It was not for him of Rome or of Lambeth or of Geneva to claim a preëminence. Confronted by the calm verdict of Science, the whole hierarchy of learning and priesthood was humbled, and forgetting the dignity of rank and reputation, cast the crowns and themselves, whatever men thought of them and whatever they were, before the Creator of All, saying, *Thou art worthy—for Thy pleasure were all things made.* In the pursuit of that natural law, which is the pleasure of the Almighty, lies the true pursuit of pleasure for man himself; and disobedience is the prelude to pain.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLORY OF THE LAMB

AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

—REVELATION 5: 1–14.

VI

THE GLORY OF THE LAMB

IN the worship of God as Creator, there was nothing new; Job so worshipped in his day and the Psalmists also. For John of Patmos, it was a splendid worship,—this glory of landscape, wonder of astronomy, miracle of the electric laws and magic of the chemist —but it left him still a lonely old man. Science and the Humanities did assuredly say thrice holy, but it was *said* not *sung;* it was prose not poetry, acoustics not music; optics not painting; anatomy not the dance and the game. Human life is a Book which Science, as four living creatures, and the Scholars, with their four and twenty thrones, dare not open. The greatest of them yearn for Something or Someone beyond their ken. Having negatived Calvary, they make their pilgrimages to-day to the long deserted caves of Endor. The disciples of Huxley travel from Faith, through Reason, to Spiritualism.

Science tells us why the salmon leaps and the lightning flames but we also want to know why wars are waged and why the poor are robbed. The annals of mankind are written, moment by moment, in a Book which remains for mankind ever closed. On the covers, historians and journalists have inscribed their shallow jottings, but the story of man is a story that man dare not tell. By his censorships and reticences is

he condemned. His records are sealed with the seven seals of the deadly sins, pride and hypocrisy and malice; and even a strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice, cannot find one personage worthy to open that book and break the seals thereof. No one is a hero to his valet. Every one has something for which to blush. The man in heaven, the idealist, dare not face the truth. The man on earth, the realist, dare not face it. The man under the earth, the pessimist, is no less a coward. There is none righteous, no not one, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Man's History Book.

Overwrought with the mystery of life, John wept much, nor was he ashamed, for he had seen Jesus Himself also weep. Here was a Book in God's right hand —suppose that God should open it and find therein that which could not be pardoned. John's certainly was sorrow, but it was not cynicism, it was not suicide, it was not satire, it was not vice and indulgence. In Christ he was saved, even from himself, and could resort to the natural and ordained expression of his sadness, to tears that were salt, not envenomed. His was a cry for comfort and help, not for vengeance, not for reprisals. He mourned, but he did not blaspheme, nor develop a grievance against God.

It was not one of the four beasts that pointed John to Christ. It was not Science that consoled him. It was not in Algebra and Zoology that he found comfort. It was one of the elders who said, *Weep not*— a man who had himself known sorrow, who had walked that way before.

He understood John's trouble. Here was Jerusalem laid waste, the temple burnt, Galilee ravaged,

synagogues shattered, churches decaying. What about this religion that one learnt at one's mother's knee? Could it read the Book of Life or not? Was it an answer or itself merely another riddle? It was no use for the elder to say to John that a new faith had arisen. John was too aged for new faiths. It was for him the old faith or nothing. It was not to the Christ of Athens, of Ephesus, of Rome, that he was referred by the elder. It was to *the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David*—the Christ with Whom he had been familiar as a boy—the Christ of Little Bethel—of the Sunday school—of the hymn book. His arm was not shortened that it could not save.

The Lamb Who Died.

There stood the Roman Empire, dominant, pagan, and triumphant over Jerusalem, yet the Lion of that little tribe had prevailed. Extinct seemed the dynasty of David, but the Root of Faith that was in him, though hidden in soil and despised and trampled down, had prevailed. For as John gazed on the majesty of God, his eyes became accustomed to that Light of Lights, and what at first had seemed to him a fleck of crimson sardius across the sunset proved now to be a Lamb as it had been slain. At the very seat of supreme authority lay the love that suffers for others. In the midst of Science and the Humanities, nearer to God than even they can ever be, lives the Christ Who died. In Apollo, Greece deified the athlete, the young man and maiden who rejoice in health and beauty, in running and leaping, in the games and races and bouts of Corinth. It was that admiration by man for man that differs little from man's admiration for his yacht or his horse. In Christ, Apollo was crucified. The Man that

Old Rome needed was the Man Who Failed. There is more comfort in Gethsemane than in Eden.

For that Lamb, there were seven horns and seven eyes—perfect power based on perfect knowledge. It was a power so varied that it could drive a cargo of wheat to areas, stricken with famine, yet so delicate that it could touch a diseased tissue with surgeon's steel. And the knowledge was as varied. It was a Spirit going forth into all the earth and searching the very souls of men. It was that Presence which wrung from Hagar in the desert—an ignorant and sadly wronged servant, the cry that has echoed through the ages, *Thou God Seest Me.*

To know all is to forgive all, and having suffered all, Christ could come forward and, without a tremor, take the Book,—take it even from Him Who sits on the Throne—and hold its every secret in His pierced hand. Here was a knowledge, more intimate than science and learning; and a new worship was evoked, not this time, of the Creator, Who made all things, but of the Redeemer, Who can pardon and restore all things. It was before the Lamb that the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down. He was the secret of life, and in His love there began to be music. For His praise, Science designed the harp and Learning composed the anthem. In prayer to Him, Industry fashioned the vials and Religion filled them with odours. Men who thus adored Him became more than they had been. Without Him, they were merchants, wage earners, capitalists, lawyers, doctors. But in Him, they were saints.

The Harps and Vials.

The harps and vials were only accompaniments to

the new song. Praise must be personal as well as instrumental. It was as yet a small and a select congregation. Christ had appealed to the best first and they were few, only twenty-eight in all. The crowd were as yet indifferent. But these few were of every tongue, kindred, race and nation. There was no privilege for Jew over Gentile, for European over Asiatic, for White over Coloured, for class over class. Unto God, they were made what by birth they were not,—kings and priests, destined to reign on the earth, in things temporal and spiritual.

It was those few elders who, out of their human experience, led the tens of thousands of angels who had never fallen and had to seek redemption. These saw the death of Christ as an act, in itself most wonderful, but not personal to themselves. That, too, was the praise rendered by the animal creation, whether in heaven, on earth, under the earth or in the sea. For such, it was enough that Christ was in God, their Creator. *Amen,* so be it, was the response of Science; Christ did create us; and the four and twenty elders, added, what was to them the supreme fact of all, that He, thus slain, liveth for ever and ever.

CHAPTER VII

THE FOUR HORSES OF THE APOCALYPSE

AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

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—REVELATION 6: 1–17.

VII

THE FOUR HORSES OF THE APOCALYPSE

HAVING faced God and found in the Lamb slain an answer to evil, John was now ready to face life. Unless he thus faced life, with all the evil that there is in life, he could not hope to enter the City of God. From this point onwards, he is a crusader who goes forth, once, twice, thrice, to conquer the New Jerusalem, and only on the third attempt, succeeds. First, John thought of life merely as the breaking of seals, as a series of facts, dates, events. It is thus that children learn history, asking what in the story comes next. But this enquiry ended in nothing. Second, John thought of life as the blowing of trumpets—as the cause before the effect—as the impulse which produced the result—as the warning that preceded the deed. But this, again, left him far from the city.

Thirdly, he realized that life is judgment—retribution—the deliberate outpouring of vials—that God also has something to say about life. And it was thus that John found at last how in righteousness must society be reorganized. This, then, is the threefold plan of the Apocalypse, in so far as the book conducts us from the vision of God on His Throne to the ultimate vision of God's Kingdom perfected in heaven and on earth.

It is the hand of Christ Himself that breaks these seals and liberates the truth. To the conquests and campaigns of monarchs and nations, to their persecutions and projects, there is to be applied a new test.

Bloodshed is to be examined by one whose blood was shed. Passion is to be tried by peace and hate by love.

The Symbols of War.

Take these four horses which appear with a noise of thunder. The Living Creatures themselves say to us "Come and See." About these horses there is nothing particularly pious or theological. It is not in churches alone that you hear their thunder. The Horses fill the history books and the newspapers. They mean in one word—War. And our first notion of history is just a series of battles and sieges. Come then and see war as war actually is.

Any one who knows even a little about the Old Testament can understand these horses. In the promised land, the beast of burden and commerce was either a camel, or an ass. It was upon an ass that Our Lord, as Prince of Peace, rode into Jerusalem. In the inventory of Job's wealth horses are not included, and the same is true, I think, of Abraham. Horses meant not wealth and happiness and blessing but the curse of militarism,—the burden of chariots, the despotism of Egypt, the aggression of Assyria and Babylon. When Jehu led a rebellion, he gathered horsemen, mounted a chariot and drove furiously. While the oxen of Elisha were ploughing, it was for the battle that horses neighed and spread their nostrils. Look at your equestrian statues—in nine cases out of ten, it is a soldier who sits in the saddle.

I. Conquest.

The first horse is white—so attractive—how the crowds cheered for that white horse! The rider was armed with a bow—a weapon that slays at a distance

—across the seas—over the frontier—*nach Paris!* The multitudes did not think that the glorious war would come home to them. The Kaiser was wearing a crown. His war was a dynastic necessity. Monarchs must go forth conquering and to conquer.

II. Slaughter.

The second seal is opened—opened by the pierced hand of Christ—and there is a horse of another colour. The horse is now red—villages are burning. The sky is aflame. And men find that peace has been taken from the earth—that they are killing one another—not by bow and arrow, at a distance—but at close quarters, with a great sword. Casualty lists are lengthening and war is disclosed as simple slaughter.

III. Food Rations.

The third seal is opened, and red war turns black. It is black mourning, black despair and above all black famine. The black horse is ridden by a food dictator, with a pair of balances in his hand. Peoples are rationed. Prices are fixed. *A measure of wheat for a penny—three measures of barley for a penny—and see there is no waste of oil and wine.* It is the siege of Samaria, on an international scale.

IV. Famine.

And then comes the pale horse,—the world-wide disillusionment—seen in the bare dawn of a desolate day. Death is the rider who has conquered—and Hell which means sorrow and misery is his aide-de-camp. He goes on killing—sometimes with the sword—sometimes with hunger—sometimes with simple death—that is, with typhus and cholera and enteric. And

beasts are let loose on the helpless—crime and lust and violence—the dogs of war.

The Hospitals of Heaven.

With the opening of the fifth seal, we find that heaven is at first only a hospital. The one sanctuary from utter wrong was that altar, beneath which huddled those few survivors, with no language as yet but a cry, *How Long?* If God is *holy and true,* why does He not avenge our blood? Guns and poison gas—just so! But how about shattered babies, ruined maidens, maddened fathers, lunatic mothers? Statesmen with your four seals, do you think you will escape the fifth? John tells you that, in Christ, for the first time, those whom you oppress and slaughter in pursuance of your schemes are given a voice—a loud voice—to which, statesmen, you must listen. Silent, the fourth part of mankind may perish of your folly, but these, in whom is Christ's testimony, cannot be silenced.

For persons demanding revenge, the Almighty has at the moment no use. Before they can sing the new song and build the new city, they must first *rest,* and so learn the peace that passeth all understanding. Indeed, they needed the white robe—it was not theirs by nature—it had to be given them—the mere fact that they had been wronged by man did not mean that they were right with God. An Armenian may be cruelly persecuted without telling the truth to his fellow Armenian. It is a profound corollary of atonement that sacrifices made by us are not enough without the sacrifice made by Christ.

The Next War.

Men talk lightly of the next war. In His love,

Christ breaks the Sixth Seal and shows us what the next war will be. National defence and so on! Rubbish. The next war will be "a great earthquake." Where millions of men and women thus strive, the very sun will be darkened by the smoke of the conflict and the moon will be fired by the flame. As stars from heaven, so will projectiles rain on the lands, dropped like unripe figs in a hurricane. As a scroll that is rolled up, so will civilization disappear in the catastrophe, and every mountain, whether of wealth or privilege—every island, be it remote by thousands of miles, will be moved from its place on the maps of mankind. All classes will find a common level and that will be underground. In dens and rocks of the mountains—in cellars and dugouts and trenches,—kings and great men,—what irony in those words!—and rich men and chief captains, and mighty men and every bondman and every freeman, will hide themselves in one common terror of remorse. Better, they will say, that the mountains fall on us, that rocks crush out our lives, than that, having made the next war, we face God on His Throne and the wrath—the *anger,* note that word—of the Lamb. For if the next war comes, it will be, in very truth, the great day of God's indignation.

There was still one seal to be broken—the seventh—and as the pierced hand thus opened the Book, there was silence in heaven for half an hour. The record struck heaven dumb. Elders and beasts, angels and archangels were speechless and God Himself sat still. Events, as such, offered no solution of life's drama. Motives had to be analyzed—the heart that hates as well as the mailed fist that strikes.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REPUBLIC OF PEACE

AND after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

* * * * * * *

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

—REVELATION 7: 1–17.

VIII

THE REPUBLIC OF PEACE

AWAKENING from such nightmare of slaughter, John's first idea of human well-being was, simply, peace. He dreamed of four angels, standing at the corners of the earth and holding back the tornadoes of human passion, which otherwise would sweep in hurricanes over land and sea. North, south, east and west, our stricken race sighed for mere tranquillity. At least, let the trees grow again—those trees which symbolized human institutions—churches, for instance, or schools, or industries. Land and sea—meaning civilized and barbaric, Christian and heathen peoples—joined in the yearning, just to be let alone. And the universal prayer was granted. A treaty was signed. A league of nations was arranged.

Peace, for a spell, meant for most of them, doubtless, no more than a chance of prosperity. John, however, says not a word here of material advance. To him, it seemed that such truce of God—such interval between world wars—was given as a test. Suppose that there is such peace—what use will people make of it? On how many foreheads will there be visible the seal of God's service? Will universal calm mean universal piety? Not yet. For the moment, there is only a spiritual minority. A disciple of Jesus looks different from the average. You can count him in

your census—a company of twelve times twelve thousand—an ascertainable statistic.

Recruits for the Christ.

Yet it is also true that, since John first looked into heaven, the cause of Christ has prospered. Then, among elders and angels, he found himself alone save for the small but highly trained choir that praised the Almighty. But there are now gathered in those regions of happiness, not elders only, but the common folk, all the tempted brotherhood of Jacob, sons that had sinned yet received the seal of pardon. As well as he could remember those names, John gave them, each name signifying a type, a profession, a racial characteristic, yet each type equally represented by twelve thousand among the sealed, showing that by all men, of every tribe, may true service be rendered, if men so will it. Amid war and famine and despair, the silent consecration of such people proceeds, unnoticed as the leaven in meal. We approach the Christ as individuals and find ourselves in a multitude.

For as John looked further, he became less and less assured that he could tell truly the number of the saints. There were so many on whose foreheads God alone could detect the seal. There were unsuspected followers of the Christ who did not fall into any known categories. They were not of Judah, nor of Zebulon—they were neither Catholic nor Protestant—neither Baptist nor Episcopalian, yet somehow they were Christ's. You could be assured of this because they stood before the throne, acknowledging God's authority, and before the Lamb, worshipping the Redeemer. You could tell this because their robes were white and unspotted, while in their hands were no in-

struments of cruelty,—no sword, no bow, no scourge and no sceptre or crozier of authority—but the palm, the symbol of democratic praise. Where elders and angels had served as choir, they now stood as audience. It was the common folk who sang in that loud voice. It was a song, no longer of vengeance, but of salvation. They had suffered not less than the martyrs, but they prayed only that all men—even their persecutors—be saved. Even among Christians was Christ's Spirit prevailing.

Their White Robes.

The scene which here confronted St. John the Divine recalls the splendid if heartless pageantry of the Roman amphitheatre. Martyrs, whose blood had stained the arena, rose from the very dust and were found triumphing amid "so great a cloud of witnesses" that the evangelist was unable to enumerate their ranks. Such was the panorama of salvation, rendered as a spectacle; such was the ceremonial of redemption; as armies are reviewed by emperors, so does the company of heaven salute God. But the saints in glory are individuals, each with a personal history, and every one of them known by name to Him Who was slain for all. To regard the Church as a perpetual public meeting is not enough. We must ask whence came the great congregation. Who are they? In what homes and what life did they live? You would have said that no one in his day was better able to answer such questions than John, but when the elder invited a reply, the apostle could only exclaim—*Sir, thou knowest.* It was the white robe that had become so effective a disguise. In a world where imperial purple and cardinal's red and Islamic green,—where gold and silver

braid and jewelled decorations were to distinguish the favoured few from the forgotten multitude, here was a new order of chivalry, equal for men and for women, for old and for young, for rich and for poor,—the order of the pure in heart, who see God. Not always had the robes been thus white. In humble penitence, these people had washed their robes—to quote a phrase as daring as it was once familiar—in the blood of the Lamb. Unashamed therefore and with consciences at ease, they stood in the very presence of Him Who judges the quick and the dead. They also serve, says Milton, who only stand and wait, and day and night, these saints were serving. If a new city was rising from its foundations, it was because in the court of Him Who ever creates there were no idlers.

The Great Tribulation.

Some men and some nations are dominated by memory of past wrongs. Their wounds never heal. But happiness is impossible unless we *come out of great tribulation,* or "trouble," for that is our usual word. Even resentment must be left behind. We must surrender the impulse to revenge and replace it by the will to assist. At the moment, it is service in a temple. The day had not yet dawned when there shall be a city where no temple is needed. The saints must still serve God in institutions, in churches and chapels and missions, of limited scope, and so must it be until the whole world is a temple.

In telling us that the saints shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, that the sun shall not light on them nor any heat, that the Lamb shall feed them and lead them to fountains of living waters, and that God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, the visionary was

quoting the very words of Isaiah. It was plagiarism, evident and proven, but that is just where the value of it lies. When Isaiah first wrote thus of God's care, you might have said that it was a pretty and poetic thought. But when John repeated the pretty and poetic thought, it had stood the test of time, of experience, of unmeasured anguish and sorrow. John himself was old and poor, but even he knew that God's care had not failed. And he laid down principles which have been seldom obeyed, except where God is employer. Here was no attempt, under the stimulus of hunger and thirst, to make men serve. Here was One Who knew that men serve best who are relieved from hunger and thirst and the scorching sun,—who are fed and who work under the best conditions of body and mind—that real service must be perfect freedom. And if that be God's will in heaven, it should clearly be done on earth.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRUMPETS SOUND

AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

—REVELATION 8: 1–6.

IX

THE TRUMPETS SOUND

THE opening of the seven seals is followed by the sounding of the seven trumpets, and this meant a new idea of life and war and pain. When the four horses of the Apocalypse rode forth on their mission as a battalion of death, it seemed to the victims whom they trampled under foot that a God of Love, like the Love of God, had ceased to be. The desolate earth heard no voice from heaven and knew not of the refuge within the altar whereon the Lamb Himself had been the first of the tortured and slain. In every age, in every society, there are people, many of them, who feel that the only creed for them is despair. All the tolerable fortune has gone to others. And, in very truth, heaven *was* silent—silent for half an hour—not a syllable of warning, of comfort, of judgment; and wrong was rampant.

The Seven Trumpets.

Then John saw again the seven angels, standing by the throne. Hitherto, those angels had uttered only a message to the churches, not to the world beyond, and to the churches, a voice,—words,—argument,—appeal was enough, for in the churches were men who had ears to hear. But for the world, something other than the voice was needed,—a trumpet, challenging,

mechanical, metallic, with a simple penetrating note. These angels went forth as a Salvation Army, as Peter the Hermit and Savonarola, ministers everywhere of solemn warning to those who wrong their brethren or their own selves. No longer was it to be possible for evil-doers to say that they knew no better. As the trumpet sounds, the awakened conscience quivers. The first forgotten fact was prayer. Which of the riders on those horses had given a thought to mothers on their knees, interceding for children; to children on their knees, praying for mothers; for fathers, begging God's blessing on sons; for gospellers beseeching salvation for sinners? Shakespeare wrote many plays; what a sensation there was when in one of them he asserted that prayer enters into the drama of life. To John, the prayers of saints were seen as clearly as incense rising from a censer. He had seen such incense in the golden vials, held by the four and twenty elders. He now realized that the incense reaches the very heart of God. An angel is especially set aside to ensure this safe delivery of every humblest petition. The folded hands may be rough with toil, and the face withered, and the dress tattered and frayed, but the prayer is none the less precious, and the censer that bears it onward to the eternal must be none other than a censer of gold. It does not say that the prayers of saints need be written, or that they must be couched in language of beauty and learning. They are prayers, and that is enough.

The Golden Altar.

On the threshold of the throne is the altar, the place of sacrifice, the golden altar. It is in Christ as our Great High Priest—our Friend at the Court of

the Eternal—that our hopes and prayers reach God, and no prayer is true which cannot be offered at that altar of His Presence. Prayers for wealth and success and vengeance must stand that test, but the test is one which leaves unscathed the prayer for mercy, for daily help and for the happiness of others. All such prayers can be offered by the Lord Himself and His angel on the golden altar before the throne.

These prayers are not only answered, but answered in full. The censer which held the incense is the same vessel which the angel filled with fire from the altar, and in equal measure, to the brim. As the prayer has risen from the earth, so descended the fire. Mount Carmel became the universe and every disciple a prophet Elijah. That fire was in the souls of men. It was the flame that kindled the enthusiasm of St. Francis, of John Knox, of the Wesleys, that burns in the hearts of missionaries and teachers, that sustains the sick and warms the poor. It has made many a toiler a nobler gentleman than many a squire; it has made many a girl in service a truer lady than many an ornament in society. Sometimes that fire merely smoulders. But you can never tell when it will break forth, sweeping like prairie flame across the societies of men and women.

When John first saw the throne, he noticed that out of it proceeded voices and thunderings and lightnings. But it did not then occur to him that these phenomena were associated with the daily prayers of himself and the disciples.

The Fire from Heaven.

Now he understood the matter fully. He felt also the earthquake—that these Christians were in reality

turning the world upside down. Here, before me, I have a recent book on Korea, by my friend, Mr. F. A. McKenzie, a journalist like myself, who writes for Lord Northcliffe and the *Daily Mail*. What does Mr. McKenzie say in his preface?—

> The mission schools taught modern history, with its tales of the heroes and heroines of liberty, women like Joan of Arc, men like Hampden and George Washington. And the missionaries circulated and taught the Bible—the most dynamic and disturbing book in the world. When a people saturated in the Bible comes into touch with tyranny, either of two things happens, the people are exterminated or tyranny ceases.

There you have precisely the explanation of the imagery we are discussing.

Fired with coals from that altar, the disciples have spread the good news of the Redeemer. They have built hospitals and schools, started missions, painted noble pictures, composed splendid music and poetry, cherished the poor, ministered unto the aged, reformed the prisons, liberated the slaves, purified marriage. It was no hurried note that those seven angels were to sound. Holding their trumpets, given them and not devised by them, they waited with reverent discipline until their heavenly comrade had dealt with the incense. The prayers of saints thus had precedence even over the sound of the prophetic trumpet. These angels were obedient and responsible souls. When given the trumpets,—the capacity to make themselves heard—they did not rant or hastily rail at Society. They *prepared themselves to sound*. They humbled

their minds. They avoided all mannerisms. One clear note rang forth, simple, direct, unwavering, and in every case it challenged the world exactly at the appointed moment. Not one trumpet call was ill-timed. Not one was irrelevant. Each in turn meant life or death.

CHAPTER X

FIRST RUMBLES OF ARTILLERY

THE first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

And the name of the star is called Wormwood, and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

—REVELATION 8: 7–12.

X

FIRST RUMBLES OF ARTILLERY

YOU would have thought that when an Angel of God sounds a trumpet in the ear of man, the answer of man would be repentance and faith. But so it has not been. Century after century rolls on—each century with its burden of prophecy,—and yet we still serve self, strive after our own pleasures, and ignore the consequences. Sitting in armchairs, we dismiss the symbolism of the Apocalypse as something remote and fantastic. Let us not be too sure. Europe knows the truth—alas too well. Russia knows it and so does Armenia. For a deliberate paganism, whether in the new or in the old world, there will be no immunity. We have no right to expect it. The decline and fall of the Roman Empire, which confronted John, will be followed by the decline and fall of any civilization that behaves like the Roman Empire. And the greater the civilization, the more terrible will be its collapse.

The Big Guns are Heard.

As the first trumpet sounded, John saw *hail and fire, mingled with blood,—all cast upon the earth.* It was his first glimpse of modern artillery, and never in literature has there been a description of explosives so brief and thus perfect. John had listened at Jerusalem to Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost,

when, quoting Joel, he had talked of *blood and fire and vapour of smoke*. He did not need the eruption of Vesuvius and the fate of Pompeii to teach him that the volcano, most to be dreaded, is the ambitious and lustful heart of man. One-third of the trees and one-third of the green grass is burnt up—a terrible loss which yet leaves two-thirds behind. Trees are the institutions of society—universities and churches and palaces—while grass means the humble homes, which also share in the ruin of a general conflagration.

Empires Fall.

The second angel sounded. If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, Jesus once declared, ye shall say unto this mountain,—Be thou cast into the midst of the sea—and it shall be done. In fire and flame such a mountain was hurled into such a sea. In the imagery of the Hebrews, the sea means that which is still failing to worship Jehovah—the Gentiles. The land is the promised land and the mountain is Zion, City of our God. When Jerusalem was captured by the Romans, the mountain was in very truth cast into the middle of the sea. It was the destruction of the higher civic organism by the lower. So also was the sack of Rome and Alexandria by the Goths—of Constantinople by the Turks—of any great city by any strong and ignorant aggressor. And here, as in other cases, there was an ample warning. With wisdom in their counsels, Jerusalem and Alexandria and old Rome would be standing to-day, undamaged. Unless cities heed their truest prophets, unless they elect to their offices the most honest of their citizens, unless they build good houses for the poor and adequate clinics for the children, they must expect, as the trumpet sounds,

to go the way of Nineveh and Tyre. As in Petrograd, a third part of the population will vanish. As in Hamburg, and Venice, and Britain, a third part of the shipping—of man's communication with man—will be wrecked.

Religions Collapse.

Another trumpet was heard and men saw a star falling from heaven. Here is the mystery of apostate religions. Protestants have identified that star with Romanism, and I do not doubt that Romanists have returned the compliment. To the mighty telescope on Mount Pasadena 300,000 stars are visible,—near and distant—great and small—and, not being a theological astronomer, I am unable, amid such a multitude, to identify this one. What I see clearly is this—that as the star fell from heaven, so in heaven should it have remained. Religions fail unless they abide in heaven or the region of happiness. The religion that falls on rivers and streams like a blight, making the waters bitter as wormwood, making the Sunday dull as a punishment, making the Bible hideous as blackletter, making sermons uninteresting as old newspapers,—that religion, whatever it be called, spreads death and gloom. I have seen it cast its pall over a village. It may paralyze a congregation. There are countries where it curses a nation. For such religions there is the same rule, be it Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic. All must be tested by the happiness which they bring to men, by the happiness which, alternatively, they destroy. When Moses threw a tree into the waters, the bitter became sweet, and so was it in Elisha's day. Ruined is any religion which turns sweet into bitter, invading the home, disturbing the

love of husband and wife, forbidding innocent pleasures, and justifying social inequalities.

Dark Ages Intervene.

No one, I think, who has studied in his Ruskin or elsewhere the interpretation of Religion by Art will be at a loss to explain the happenings which followed the blast of the fourth trumpet. The Light of the World was obscured. Dark ages set in. The sun, as source of light, was clouded, meaning surely God's direct illumination of the heart. The moon, where light is reflected, was also eclipsed, meaning the Scriptures—art—all that shows forth the Being of God. That era dawned wherein the glories of mediæval architecture hardened into a gridiron window; and the splendours of an instructed evangelism into a mere repetition of formulas; when ceremonies, once full of meaning, became mechanical; when theology was high and dry or low and dead. A third part of the stars,—of the churches—were dark and moribund.

This is the fourth disaster. It follows revolution, ruin, apostasy. It is the overshadowing of a brilliant *régime*. It is what overtook the Roman Empire, and unless we heed our warnings, it surely threatens our own proud and elaborate civilization. But the ruin, whether of property, states, churches, or civilization is only as to "one-third." Evil is only partial—local—temporary and nothing can be universal, nothing can encompass land and sea, except the good—the ultimate City of God.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIERCE BIRDS OF PREY

AND I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.

And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon.

One woe is past; *and,* behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

—REVELATION 8: 13–9: 1–12.

XI

THE FIERCE BIRDS OF PREY

OF all birds, the eagle, with its talons that clutch and its beak that tears, is I suppose by reputation the most cruel. It is the imperial bird, its very eye describable as piercing, the symbol of power and of pride. Yet it was the eagle, the bird of prey, that was changed by the inhumanity of man towards man into an angel of pity. From such scenes, the very eagle had to flee in horror, crying, *Woe, Woe, Woe.* The Roman eagle could not face it. The Russian eagle disappeared. The German eagle hurried away. The Austrian eagles vanished. The eagles of Napoleon are no more. And there remain no eagles, save those of democracy. Thrice *Woe* was the alternative to thrice *Holy.* Government must either be godly or the negation of God.

Revolutions are Described.

With the sounding of the first four trumpets, many established institutions were overthrown. Churches collapsed and dynasties were doomed. The time had come when new forces must enter the field of history. So with the fifth trumpet, it seemed as if a star fell from heaven. It was a phenomenon, very familiar to revolutionary upheavals—the brilliant but hapless aristocrat who becomes, for the moment only, a champion

of prevailing discontents. Such was Mirabeau—such the Girondists in France; such the Lvoffs and Tolstoys and Kropotkins of Russia—men who in troublous times desert their sphere of society and find themselves by some destiny holding the key of the bottomless pit of passion and misery. Such men unloose forces which they cannot control, the smoke of a great furnace, all the prejudices and ignorance bred by oppression. The sun by which we alone can see and the air by which we alone can breathe are darkened by the fumes of anarchy, and from the pit there emerge swarms of locusts. These are the denizens of the underworld, the *canaille,* the peons, the serfs, the seventy-five per cent. of slavedom on which rested the Roman Empire, who have lived so close to the soil that mere eating—the mere satisfaction of material needs—is their utmost desire. Hence, the Jacobins, the Bolsheviki,—hence Terrorists anywhere.

The un-Christian Proletariat.

The locusts, so despised but yesterday, now receive power, the proletariat mounts the saddle and becomes supreme. It is not a Christian proletariat; it has power as of a scorpion, the power of injury, a nature turned to poison. And thus there opens a Reign of Terror, not indeed very long,—the period is five months—but appalling while it lasts—a veritable torment. Revolution has its horrors, but it is on the whole less destructive than wars of aggression. Simple things like grass and trees and greenery survive and, even in their fury, the people have no quarrel, save with those who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads. Democracy has its spasms of madness but, on the whole, democracy does not persecute. In democracy, there is room

for discipleship. Such toleration is "commanded"—it is a fundamental law.

The Reign of Terror.

But the mere fact that democracy has been liberated from a bottomless pit of degradation does not mean that democracy is yet safe for the world. It has a sting in its tail. In the clubs and committees of democracy, where is exercised the power of life and death over individuals, the prick of a pin may kill a suspect. A personal grudge may doom innocence. There has to be a surveillance, else men would commit suicide. Living under such conditions, they would rather make an end of themselves. The life is not worth the living of it.

With a press highly organized throughout the world and served by actual spectators of what is occurring, we yet obtain but a confused idea of the great war and of the revolutions which followed it. We need not be surprised, then, if John, scanning a distant horizon, presents at times a confused idea also of what he dimly sees. The point is that his eye discovers amid the confusion the things which are vital, as for instance this supreme issue whether, amid our empires and republics, life has or has not been made worth while. So also, he is able at least to detect the essentials of modern revolution. He foresaw that revolutions are not pacifist. No sooner are the locusts free of the bottomless pit than you find them armed with breastplates of iron and mounted, as on chariots drawn by horses to battle. On their heads are crowns of gold—the trappings of a despoiled civilization—and while they are men they are careless of appearances and, by a curious trait, allow their hair to grow like a

woman's. Thus were the Goths—the first revolutionists—who emerged from the bottomless pit of barbarism and seized on old Rome. Thus also were the French who seized on old France and the Russians who seized on old Russia.

The Rise of Marat and Lenine.

John saw, too, that even revolutionists must find a leader. The bright but ill-fated star that falls into the movement from a world, once happier, will not serve. The leader must be, in the long run, some man like Marat or Lenine who has himelf lived in the bottomless pit. He must be among the emerged—a Danton, a Robespierre, a Trotsky. But while he is comrade, he acts as king. He is as much a personal despot as the tyrants whom he displaces. It is not liberty that the revolution has secured, but merely a new autocracy, brought into the daylight. The man may be called by different names in different countries,—Abaddon in Hebrew or Apollyon in Greek—but his meaning and purpose are the same. He is a destroyer, not a builder. He makes the rich poor without making the poor rich. He tears down the old Jerusalem, but lays no foundation for the new. He burns the Tuileries, but erects no tenements. He shatters the churches but leaves the cottages still to rot. He criticizes constitutions without thinking of better. He is negative, not positive—even as a woe, he is not perpetual, for suddenly his day passes. And he becomes but an evil memory.

CHAPTER XII

BY THE RIVER EUPHRATES

AND the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions: and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

—REVELATION 9: 13–21.

XII

BY THE RIVER EUPHRATES

WHEN I told a friend in the ministry that I was writing next about the Apocalypse, he answered cheerfully that my troubles would begin with the River Euphrates. As the Sixth Angel sounds his trumpet, I find myself standing by the old and formidable stream, where so many rival interpreters have fought one another and died. When John was perplexed, he had a habit of looking upwards, and he never so looked in vain. Thus it was that he saw the eagle of pity flying over an unconscious world of sorrow and pain. Thus it was that, here by the Euphrates, he caught a nearer glimpse of the golden altar before the Throne.

The Four-Horned Altar.

Hitherto, that altar had only suggested to John's mind the idea of incense, of prayer. Here was the religion of personal piety, of devotional text-books, of holiness and confidence in God. About that incense there was an exquisite flavour of reverence and of beauty, but John now perceived that the altar of incense was furnished also with horns. To him, as a Jew, bred in the symbolism of the tabernacle, these horns meant—in one word—power. When the Lamb in the midst of the throne was seen with seven horns, it meant Christ in His varied omnipotence. The liv-

ing creature which had ten horns was an empire with push,—strong and aggressive. If Joab, the son of Zeruiah, fled from the wrath of Solomon and clung to the horns of the altar, it was because in the extremity of his peril he sought to grip that thing in his religion which would not give way.

An altar, as seen by John, having four horns, meant therefore, a faith which influences history in all directions—north and south and east and west. It is the religion which abolished the slave trade, which fights the opium and the liquor traffic, which puts down the mighty from their seats and exalts them of low degree. It was from the powerful "horn" of such a religion that the Voice cried, "*Loose the four angels which are bound in the great River Euphrates.*"

Imperialism.

That ancient waterway, first mentioned as flowing through the Garden of Eden, had always been the boundary of Israel's hopes. To a Jew like John, the River Euphrates was what the St. Lawrence is to the Canadian, what the Rhine is to a Frenchman or a German, what the Indus was to Alexander the Great. The valley of the Euphrates was the battle-field where Medes and Persians, Turks and Tartars and Babylonians have, century after century, fought to the death. To loose the four angels of that river was to let slip over all the world,—north and south and east and west—the hungry dogs of war. It was as if some Mexican were to loose the angel of the Rio Grande. It was as when the Czar, provoking Japan, loosed the angel of the Yalu River; or the Austrians, impudently slandering Serbia, loosed the four angels of the Danube. There is not a frontier river on the face of

the globe where the angels of ambition and greed and jealousy and malice do not lie bound, and so must it be, except as the hearts of men are changed.

Der Tag Announced.

Germany was offered by her greatest man, Martin Luther, the greatest gift of which man is capable,—that is, a Bible translated into the vernacular of the common folk. It was by the deliberate act of Germans themselves that the Bible was closed. The very warning which would have saved Germany from defeat and disgrace therefore went unheeded. The militarists of Prussia, who over their cups toasted *Der Tag,* were totally oblivious of the fact that they were playing the terrible part, foreshadowed in John's vision—that they were preparing the four angels of modern and world-wide war, for an hour and a day and a month and a year—for a precise, prearranged moment, when the chief of staff had merely to touch a button and all the murderous machinery for slaying one-third part of men would be put into operation. In John's days, the mere notion that armies would number two hundred million men seemed preposterous. Yet this is the figure that he mentions,—doubtless as a symbol. With a note of sheer incredulity, he exclaims, *"I heard the number of them."* For us, an organization for killing mankind does not seem preposterous when estimated at two hundred millions. In the late upheaval there were fully that number of men and women engaged either in the fighting, or upon munitions, or upon what was called war work.

Development of Artillery.

John's earlier vision of war was simple. He saw

the horses and he saw their riders. But he now perceives that science has been brought to bear upon the practice of slaughter. I would ask those who deny the miracle of prophecy to read in some true translation what now follows. What are these breastplates, "fiery-red, fuliginous, and sulphurous," seen by John on the horizon of time? What are these horses, with heads as of lions, belching forth from their mouths fire and smoke and brimstone? What is this strange weapon which hurts with its tail? I have read much war correspondence, many graphic pictures of a battle on the Somme or the Argonne or around Verdun. Nowhere have I read so terse, so accurate and so compelling a description of modern artillery, in its many deadly forms,—the poison gas, the great guns, the whizz-bangs, the aerial and aquatic torpedoes.

Commerce and War.

And in summing up the whole business he strikes straight and he strikes deep at the motives which make men quarrel over the great River Euphrates. What men were considering was the works of their hands. They were after trade and profits and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood. The devil of it all was in the metal deposits, the valuable forests, the hope of exploiting somebody else's vineyard. No attention was paid to men and women and children who are alive, who see and hear and walk about. And the saddest part is that when peace came, and losses were reckoned up and the bills paid, there were those whose minds were unchanged as to the murders—Ludendorfs and Hindenburgs, who did not at all repent of their sorceries; profiteers who boasted of their thefts and professors who still prostituted the

truth to the cause of organized assassination. When once you unloose those four angels of the great River Euphrates, you can never be assured that they will be again bound and helpless. Indeed, John does not mention their recapture. And I cannot but contrast these four messengers, who turned the River of Eden into blood, and the Garden of Eden into a wilderness, with the seven good messengers, who stood before the throne, doing the will of the one Father.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ANGEL AND THE BOOK

AND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth,

And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

—REVELATION 10: 1–11.

XIII

THE ANGEL AND THE BOOK

YOU will remember that when the Seventh Seal was broken, there was silence in heaven for half an hour. Even John, with his preternatural instinct for divining the tendencies of history, was baffled by the problems of our modern era, could get no further, and had to begin his journey through the future all over again, treading a longer and more arduous path, in which, at every step, he traced events to causes. With a deeper vision and a keener hearing, he is now back again at the point of time which before was silence, and we shall find that his story, though told in symbol, is as plain as what we read, of a morning, in the newspaper.

Let us recall, for an instant, the conclusion of the last chapter. We had seen that, according to John's foresight, idealists everywhere were bitterly complaining that a great war had failed to change men's selfish and corrupt minds,—to lead them into repentance—and that all the loss, all the bloodshed had been in vain. Now, whatever else we may think of the seer on Patmos, we must at least admit that, on the evidence of his Visions, he was a man who could face the worst. If, then, his dream, already so terrible in many of its details, did not end in sheer nightmare, it was only because in the darkest hour this great saint

of God could again look upward, and while not one sorrow, not one plague, not one panic, not one massacre escaped his ruthless imagination, could display the courage to see a hitherto unsuspected yet mighty angel, standing astride the oceans, so recently stained with blood, and the lands just ruined and desolated.

What exactly was the prospect which John descried, as it were, on the horizon? Well, it was just this. Statesmen and merchants and travellers were foolishly seeking happiness in the River Euphrates. All their discussions, their treaties, the articles they contributed to the monthly reviews, and their plots centred around some river, its access to the sea, its strategic possibilities and its industrial resources. But John had been taught that the kingdom of heaven is within us, that what matters is not the River Euphrates, flowing through a deserted Eden, which wrong-doing had withered, but our thought, the books we read, the hopes we cherish, the impulses we foster and the pleasures we enjoy. Hence it was that he shows us this mighty angel, dominating land and sea, not because he commanded armies and navies, but because in his hand he held one little Book. In the whole Roman Empire, rich, wise and powerful as were many of the men who governed it—I doubt if there was one person of sufficient discernment to follow John's amazing idea, at this time, that a Book would transform history.

The Bible Distributed.

About the Book, there is no secret. With the Seventh Trumpet about to sound, it is a Book which lies open to all men's eyes. It is a Book neither sealed nor chained, but freely translated into every tongue,

and cheaply printed for every reader, however poor. A penny or two will buy it. So thin is its paper—in our day, though not in John's—that a pocket will hold it. Though the Canon of Scripture was yet undecided when John wrote, we have now the plain fact that his dream is realized—the antidote to war and hatred and vice is a Book—the Bible is an actuality, impossible to dismiss—and if John wrote more truly than he knew, that theory only brings in a Greater than John and asserts His larger mind. For what an amazing thing it is that the book should seem "little" to John! Just what any ancient would say if he could see the size of our volumes—especially our pocket Bibles.

With an astounding insight, John realized that the angel or messenger who carries this Book, though it is so small, must be in himself "mighty." The distribution of the Scriptures, their liberation from ecclesiastical and political bondage, has always been a tremendous task. In that mighty messenger of goodwill, we see the scholar, poring over ancient manuscripts,—the translator reducing to grammar the language of some savage tribe—the colporteur leading his laden beast over the pony tracts of Spanish mountains—the boy or girl putting pennies into the Bible Society box—the artist who paints sacred scenes—the archæologist who unearths sacred cities. That mighty angel is anybody, anywhere, at any time, who gives the Bible, by any method, or explains the Bible, or lives the Bible, among whomsoever he may labour. This angel had no wings—as had the Angel of Pity, who cried Woe, Woe, Woe. The angel with the Bible had feet, firmly planted on the world where we actually live. He was no mere emotionalist, flying over the

clouds, but a practical helper of hard pressed men and women.

The Inspired Colporteur.

This, then,—our Bible—was what John declared to be the medicine for the various developing curses of mankind. It is the book for sea and land,—for Jew and Gentile—for Christian and Pagan—for those who believe and those who don't—for those who are still at sea, and those whose feet have touched the *terra firma* of faith. But the messenger who brings the Bible should be worthy of his calling. The mighty angel was radiant with the attributes of divinity. His garment was the very cloud which clothes the Being of God. The canopy over his head was the rainbow of the covenant which means that, amid tumults and disappointments, God is true to His word with man. On his face, shining like the sun, there is hope, joy, purpose, while his feet, beautiful upon the mountains, are as pillars of fire—burning with unquenchable enthusiasm. That was John's conception of a colporteur —of any one who tries to get men to look into the Bible. They must be risen with Christ, and as glorious as He, when John saw Him.

The cry of the colporteur and of the evangelist, or "good angel" of the world,—for this is what evangelist means—sometimes seems to us to be feeble and vacillating—indeed, scarcely audible amid the din of our progress. But what John heard was this cry in its challenging authority over the human conscience. He had been troubled with visions of war. But his idea was now that, with the coming of peace, the sound of the Gospel would ring in men's ears, louder than ever before. The teachings of Christ,—so simple, so calm,

so just—would be feared by unrepentant men and women, as we fear the roar of a lion. The echo, throughout the world, would roll as rolls a sevenfold peal of thunder—a peal, like the seven stars themselves, at once varied according to circumstances and perfect—touching every department of life—the home, the bank, the armies and navies, agriculture, art, scholarship. The thunder meant lightning—events—facts—but it was no part of John's task to tell the men of his day what those events would be. He was not writing to satisfy an irreverent curiosity. But we of a later century are now able to see that the Bible in India means strange yearnings for political suffrage,—that the Bible in China has changed the Manchu Dynasty into a Republic—that the Bible in Britain has loosened the chains of child serfs in the mines and factories of Lancashire. With this Book abroad in the world, tyranny of any kind is no longer undisturbed. There are thunders;—a storm somewhere—distant, it may be, but approaching,—a clearance of long accumulated electricity. If John's pen was restrained—that was the condition of all great art. Every picture, every poem, every essay should impress one with something unsaid,—with deep unseen roots, below ground.

History Made Rapidly.

No one, who has read thus far what I have written, will accuse me of bringing to John's Vision a number of rigid and preconceived opinions. Obviously, I am explaining the Book, line by line, as it appeals to me, not knowing in advance whither the spirit within me may be led. If I regard this period of the Seventh Seal as peculiarly our own, it is because I can do no

other. The conclusion is to me inevitable. In arriving at it, I have had no conscious choice of the route to be pursued. Hence, it is with a touch of awe that, having found myself in an era where the Bible is so important a world-wide factor in human destiny, I see that the mighty angel, raising his hand to heaven, swore an oath by Him that liveth in the ages of the ages. Who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it—Who therefore knows all that there is to be known about our universe. What is that oath, so tremendous in its asseveration? It is that Time, or more truly Delay shall be no longer,—that great events will now move with great rapidity—that human life is at its culmination.

For the moment, I leave it thus. In these verses John himself only tells us that, in this period, the mystery of God will be finished. How to define that mystery, I do not yet inquire, but its completion or finishing means a final and complete understanding—a long delayed settlement between human society and Jesus Christ. From this point onwards, every syllable of the Apocalypse confronts the rebels with their Sovereign Lord.

A Personal Gift.

I am encouraged in thus leaving the mystery, because to John also there came a message—from a familiar Voice—from Christ Himself, Whom he had seen, as his vision opened, which voice said to him, in effect—*The important thing for you, John of Patmos, is not these seven interesting thunders—not the Bolshevism and the Yellow Peril—but that you yourself take from the mighty angel, just this one little Book-*

Don't merely glance at it. Eat it. Get it into your very system, make it part of yourself—your mind—your soul. Jeremiah had this idea of thus appropriating the Scriptures. So had Ezekiel. And, with that daring which He displayed so often in His symbolism, our Saviour Himself would speak of our eating His flesh and drinking His blood, so having His life pulsating within us.

Christ did not deceive John. He knew that while the Bible is in form—and to our taste—the sweetest of all literature—it is a substance hard to digest. Literally, it does not *agree* with us—with our habits, our comforts, our jealousies, our worship of success—it is a diet, at once, unusual and exacting.

But any one who thus masters the Bible becomes, like John of Patmos, a person with whom society has to reckon. He acquires that which cannot be ignored. He prophesies concerning nations and kingdoms and many kings. When Paul was told that he must stand before monarchs, he was a young man with life before him and there was a fair inherent probability on human grounds that the saying would be fulfilled. But John was now an aged, forgotten captive. I doubt if he ever expected again to cross the ocean. But the very fact that I am writing this book and that it is to be published, means that for centuries John has prophesied for nations and their rulers. What seemed then so utterly improbable, has been changed into a recorded miracle. He being dead, yet speaketh. Beyond all contradiction, many kings and kingdoms and many peoples must confront this singular, formidable and unsparing prophet, who alone has fathomed the moral whirlpools of our annals.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TWO OLIVE TREES

AND there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months.

And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

—REVELATION 11: 1–10.

XIV

THE TWO OLIVE TREES

HERE then we have in John a man who has made the Bible his daily food. He has—so to say—eaten the Book and it has become a part of himself. He may have been too poor a man to have a copy of his own in those days of the manuscript and he was thus like some invalid who is too blind to read, too weak to hold, too deaf to hear the Scriptures—who yet remembers and is comforted. John recalled one, as lonely as himself, and as imaginative—and this friend in need was none other than the prophet Ezekiel. Both men had been taken captive of the Pagan. Both had seen a temple at Jerusalem, the marvel of the East, looted, burnt, and its stones thrown down. So disillusioned, both had looked upwards and had seen heaven opened. Ezekiel had joined the church triumphant while John remained in the church militant. But their thoughts were in touch, not by means of an occult medium, but in words which one man wrote and the other man read.

Most of the Jews, there by the waters of Babylon, hung their harps on a willow tree and merely bewailed the lost Zion. Ezekiel, however, arrived at the tremendous conviction that Zion, the place where God's name dwells, can never be destroyed. He took an actual rod, so many inches long, and measured the

New Jerusalem of his hopes as accurately as an architect measures a warehouse or a mansion. His courage inspired others. What one man dreams, another man fulfils. A few years later, a second prophet, Zechariah saw with his own eyes the new temple as it rose slowly from its foundations. Often the workers were weary, they would go on strike, not realizing that they were themselves a part of the common task of reconstruction. At such moments of industrial crisis, Zechariah would take Ezekiel's rod and would measure the masonry, so many bricks laid by each man per diem, and would show the men how it was up to them to make the prophet's dream come true.

Brick and Mortar Churches.

That temple of Zechariah also disappeared. A king arose called Herod, who wanted something grander and richer, a great display of bricks and mortar, on a corner site, costing millions of money and including the money-changers' tables. In the wilderness, a mere tabernacle of canvas had been enough for the people's worship, and even David had to learn that God pays more attention to the cleanliness of our hands than to the magnitude of our subscriptions. When Christ came, He looked on Herod's temple and said sternly that all these fine stones would be one day demolished, leaving the soul of man as the only eternal shrine where God is revered. It was this temple of the soul that John was invited to measure. He was to turn from the seen to the unseen, from the material to the ideal, yet his ideals were to be no vague or flimsy romances like the movies, where to get rich without work is the one secret of momentary happiness. They were to be ideals for every day, as definite as the foot-

rule of the carpenter and as straightforward. God's will was to be done on earth exactly as it was done in heaven. With the rod of duty, we strike the Red Sea and pass over dryshod. With that rod, we smite the rock and it yields the water of life. And with the rod, we also reckon up the humdrum "chores" of each morning in the kitchen.

Looking from his window at Patmos, John had only seen at first the seven little churches of Asia. In his landscape, they were the only twinkling points of light. But now despite all calamities, he begins to notice the influence of Our Lord on society as a whole. He speaks of the city and he has a clear idea of what a city should be. The other day, I saw a statement that, at the current census, it would be found that at last New York had outstripped London in population. Mere size was made the test of a city's success. But this was not John's idea. It was only Babylon that he called great and Babylon fell. Jerusalem was to be "holy," which means not big so much as healthy and joyful and endowed with plenty of children, playing safely in the streets thereof. To John, the true city was a sacred thing, as sacred as a church, and they who misgovern a city are guilty of an offense no less than blasphemy against God Himself. Graft is not merely a venial theft; it is sacrilege. To use John's words, it is the Gentile treading the holy city under his feet. John did not despair of the city. He was not one who wanted to send everybody back to the land. He remembered that Christ wept over the city and died for it. He also remembered that the city men who murdered Christ dared not do so until they had first taken Him outside the gates, as they afterwards took Stephen. It was their one redeeming scruple. They

did wrong but they dared not do it in the full light of public opinion.

Probably John would say that we build our cities on a wrong plan. We want a seaport or a factory or a mine to be developed. Some such commercial aim is our objective and the homes of the workers can be left to take care of themselves. John held that there should be no cities at all except where the first aim of the workers is worship. His city is therefore built around a temple. He would say that there could have been no American Constitution if the Pilgrim Fathers had not first brought into the new world their Bible. He recognized that Christ is at present only obeyed in the inner sanctuary, that the outer courts are still in the hands of the Gentiles. In his day, as in ours, few there be who go to church, and fewer still who truly worship there. But those few were the people whom John "measured."

Catholics and Protestants.

Born and bred in Syria, John could not imagine a city without foliage and he recalled how Zechariah had written of two olive trees, growing in the city as witnesses of God. Through these trees, the dark soil, crushed beneath the pavement or trodden hard under the heedless foot of man, yields a silent yet vivid sap which is drawn upwards by the will of God Himself and then poured forth as oil, through golden pipes. And the truth for Zechariah, faced by the tyranny of Babylon, was—*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.* The oil of the olive anointed priests and kings, healed the sick, and caused the face of the sad to shine for joy.

The olive trees in a city thus mean a spiritual soci-

ety, first founded by the Christ on the Mount of Olives, where He ascended, and then spreading throughout the world. For John, as for Zechariah, there were two Olive Trees,—a duality—not one alone. Both these men of insight realized that the Father would be worshipped and served by men of diverse tempers. Of such dualities, we have many examples in lords and commons, church and state, army and navy, husband and wife. To John, the chief duality was Law and Prophecy. For thousands of years, he had seen the priest and the seer witnessing to Jehovah. There was Abraham the prophet blessed by Melchizedek the priest. There were Moses and Aaron—and so on, throughout the entire Hebrew history. Only in Christ are priesthood and prophecy perfectly united. And to Him, therefore, two witnesses are needed, still the priest and still the prophet, still the Catholic and still the Protestant, each with an equal duty to influence the world by God's Spirit. The two Olive Trees looked like rivals, but were really comrades. As one grew, so did the other, and as one fell, so fell the other also. And they shared the same revival.

Temporal Power.

Such is the profound wisdom here revealed in this vision of the Two Olive Trees. Not that Catholic is to destroy Protestant or Protestant destroy Catholic, but that in all their varied branches Catholics and Protestants are to be commissioned equally to show forth the purposes of the One Lord. These institutions, little as they sometimes realize it, do exercise an authority that shuts up heaven against men—that makes happiness impossible. Even to-day, interdict and excommunication are terrible punishments and

there is little sense of "blessing,"—what John calls, as Shakespeare called it, "rain"—for those who feel themselves debarred from religion by a lapse of morals and an uneasy conscience. History records of those Olive Trees that, as foreseen by John, they should be the cause of strife on land and sea. Their armadas have turned waters into blood. Their wars have smitten the people with every plague. Let a man resist their authority, and fire did flame upon him—the fires of Smithfield, for instance,—the *auto da fé*—and there were indeed many manners and methods in which the enemies of the Church were killed. And the end of it all was that the strong Church—the established church—the Church armed with temporal power—the persecuting church, finished its testimony and was swept to the ground. The policy of such churches was not Christ's policy. They had to be obliterated.

For out of the bottomless pit of human degradation which the churches should have drained of its iniquity, there arose the Beast or living creature,—the revolutionist to whom all churches are merely the instruments of the capitalist class, a form of oppressing the people, to be destroyed—to be swept away. In Russia and France and Germany, the Olive Trees have been laid to the ground; faith is treated as the superstition of a bygone age; and as John did in fact foretell, people rejoiced at the good riddance. Religion has become a mere jest at which the humorists wax merry and moral restraints which had tormented society are gone, as men think, forever. People send gifts to one another, reserving nothing for Him from Whom all gifts come. There is a general good fellowship among the fortunate which ignores the want of those who are in need. From the claims of Him Whom they will

not have to rule over them, there is a great emancipation.

The Revival Comes.

But there are certain results. The cities in their greatness sometimes become like Sodom. On the people, there settles too often a bondage as of Egypt. Rationalism does not mean, as men had thought, that there is in society a sense of justice satisfied—quite the reverse. They who have attacked the churches never seem more restless than when the churches lie dormant. For the corpse of the Faith still remains. Into the empty and silent cathedrals wander the tourists, looking wide-eyed at the edifices which piety had designed and built—which impiety can pull down but never reproduce. In those prostrate Olive Trees, few suppose for an instant that life survives. Few imagine that in His witnesses Jesus Christ will again rise from the dead. Yet it will be so. What the Olive Trees lacked was the Spirit of God and when that Spirit again enters into them, it will mean life and dignity; they will stand upright upon their feet. A great fear will fall upon men. "What!" they will say, "then this religion really means something after all! And we must still reckon with it. Or if we fail so to do, it will reckon with us."

CHAPTER XV

THE REVIVAL OF THE CHURCHES

AND after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The second woe is past; *and,* behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

—REVELATION 11: 11–19.

XV

THE REVIVAL OF THE CHURCHES

JOHN was one who had seen Jesus Himself laid in the tomb, dead, yet rise again and ascend into heaven. To him, therefore, it was not incredible that the cause of Christ, though crushed as those Olive Trees, should revive in power and in faith. The Church has often decayed, often pursued wrong methods, but its ruin has never been final. It has never lasted longer than half the week.

Having himself witnessed the effect of Pentecost on Jerusalem, John could estimate how a Church, renewing its witness, would move a city which had become like Sodom or Egypt. There would be the same *great fear,* the same *earthquake*—men again declaring that these disciples wanted to turn the world upside down. And there would be the destruction in the city of much —what John calls a tenth—the saloons, places of ill-resort, even palaces of undue extravagance, and certainly slums and sweatshops. A tithe of sheer loss would mean nine-tenths of sheer gain.

Aristocracies Disappear.

It does not say precisely that, in the earthquake, seven thousand lives of men would be lost, but only seven thousand names of men—a curious and stimulating phrase. Certain ranks and callings would disappear—the paraphernalia of aristocracy, for instance,

and opium selling, and the tipsters' craft and whatever is condemned by a true civic judgment. They who remained were affrighted—theirs was a wholesome terror of an awakened public opinion. The Church had become in very truth the conscience of the State.

For there was something about this inspired company of the disciples which was not of this world. At first, it had been only some individual like John who had heard the command, *Come up hither.* But now the loud voice of the Saviour, summoning the faithful to a higher life—to those seats in heavenly places with Christ, of which Paul had spoken years before to the Christians of those Asian Churches—uplifted a great company. These disciples are not only risen from the dust with Christ, but with Christ they are ascended. They have attained the heaven, the happiness, which in past years had seemed in the air, far removed from actualities, a mere dream of the mystic. For the very enemies of the Church could now see that here were folk for whom even heaven was a fact. And to the God of heaven—the God Who desires no dwelling place save happy homes and hearts—those very enemies gave glory. Here was something which God alone could have accomplished.

The Cloud of God.

For it was in a Cloud that these disciples achieved their Ascent. Centuries earlier that Cloud had been a kind of Presence above and beyond the common people, a Pillar rising far aloft of the Tabernacle, reaching even to the summit of Mount Sinai, which only men of especial holiness like Moses, or privilege like Aaron, can enter, and then but on rare occasions. But here we have God as a Cloud Who surrounds us all

with love and care and splendour, and a safeguard, so that enemies who see the Cloud cannot reach whoever may be within it.

In literature as in life, there are interruptions which help. John had planned to write gloomily about three woes, each worse than the last, but he found that, even in days of struggle, it was not all woe,—other and happier topics crept in—the Angel of the Book—the Measuring of the City—the Revival of the Olive Trees —and, really, before he knew it, the second woe had passed. It was less dark than he feared—only one-tenth of the city, after all, had suffered and only seven thousand names had been changed. Yet John could not even thus believe that a brighter day was dawning. *Behold!* he cried, *the third woe cometh quickly,*—and we hold, as it were, our breath. We wait—and this third woe never came at all. Instead of it, there is a song of triumph.

When the seventh seal was opened, heaven was silent for half an hour. There was no praise, no prayer, only a dumb dismay. They could not hear the voice of God in history; they had no voice of their own. But when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, heaven broke loose and great voices were heard, saying

> *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of Our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.*

In the revival of the churches, they saw the triumph of the Cross in all human affairs and the four-and-twenty elders, falling on their faces, thanked God that He had taken to Himself His great power, and

had reigned, and had met the anger of nations by His righteous wrath against wrong, and had judged the quick and the dead. The temple was thrown open and all could see the unshaken ark of the covenant within —ever there but too often concealed. Religion, too long a mystery, was frankly discussed, analyzed, criticized, argued out, by all classes of people. It was tested by publicity.

It was a great and, it seemed, the final climax—the completed victory of good over evil. But, in the very echo of the anthem, was heard the low, distant reverberation of thunder on the horizon—was seen the far-off flash of eternal artillery—the shouts of men in strife also reached the ear—and great hail, as of shrapnel and bullets. Away, in the distance, the war was still waged. There were kingdoms still to be conquered.

CHAPTER XVI

EVERYWOMAN

AND there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

* * * * * * *

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child.*

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

—REVELATION 12: 1–17.

XVI

EVERYWOMAN

WHEN first I read about this resplendent woman, clothed with the sun and adorned with a tiara of twelve stars, I assumed with others that so glorious a Lady must have been the Church, the very Bride of Christ, pursued by the Neros of the Roman Empire; or even the Virgin Mary herself, driven through the wilderness into Egypt by the murderous designs of Herod the King. Doubtless such ideas were in the mind of John, yet somehow they did not seem to be in themselves a full and adequate interpretation of an allegory so impressive.

A Memory of Motherhood.

This most noble Queen, whose mere appearance caused wonder in heaven, means more for us surely than any limited or historical application, however dignified. It is worth noting that of all the apostles, James and John alone had a mother mentioned in the Gospels. She was, of course, an ambitious woman who wanted her sons to be the statesmen of the kingdom, to sit the one on the right and the other on the left of the Christ on His throne, but at least she took an interest in the aims and ideals of her boys and it was Jesus Himself Who paid her the highest compli-

ment when He chose John, whom she had brought up, to be the guardian of His Mother in her declining years. What John owed to that companionship appears in much that he wrote and especially in this picture that he gives us of what in these days we should call everywoman—that is woman the wide world over, the eternal mother of children in every age, your own mother, your own wife and your sister and daughter.

For generations she had lived behind a veil, restrained by custom, but now at last she appears, stands forth, votes, sits in Parliament and in Congress, works in a factory and an office, practices medicine, beats the Senior Wrangler at Mathematics, drives her own automobile, manages her own clubs, plays men's games, owns and administers property. It is no wonder that she decks her hair with those twelve stars. Where would the patriarchs and prophets and apostles have been if mothers had not borne them, reared them, clad them, guided them and taught them? It is no wonder that she is clothed with the sun. What more alluring thing can the light linger upon than the smile of a mother over her child, which dominated the art of the Middle Ages and still survives in the romance of today? What need had such a woman as this of the moon? Where she is, there can be no darkness. Let her tread it under her feet.

Greater than any church is Everywoman. More divine than any ceremony is what in duty she does. Every life that she bears is at risk of her own. Through suffering alone is her child made perfect. This at any rate is no symbol. It is the big fact in every family. The people who try to symbolize it live too often in books and organizations and too little in the nursery and the sick room.

Dress and the Dressmaker.

As she emerges from her age-long obscurity, Everywoman encounters at once a Dragon which is as great a wonder of iniquity as she is a wonder of goodness. Like the Roman Empire in John's days, the Dragon is red with the blood of victims slain for reasons of state. He has seven heads, being a most astute dragon, and ten horns, being a most brutal dragon, and on his heads are seven crowns, showing that he is also a most royal and pageant-loving dragon. Very royal and very pageant loving, yet with all his etiquette, this dragon displays no chivalry when it comes to a matter of justice for Everywoman. If she has a title, that is a different affair. If she wears a pretty dress, well and good. But if she only makes the dress, she receives scant courtesy from the Dragon, despite his seven crowns. The Dragon has a tail. It is an influence that sweeps around society, drawing to itself a third part of the stars and casting them to the earth. In John's language the stars were churches and their fall meant that religion became secular under the influence of fashion. Attendance at church was a mere church parade for the exhibition of wealth and beauty. Preachers were worldly and popes yearned for temporalities while endowments developed into snares.

Birth Control and Child Neglect.

This Red Dragon is thus our pagan, war-waging, money-snatching civilization, in which we see first an emancipation of women as we call it, and secondly a deadly menace to motherhood. At the very birth, the Dragon would devour the child. It battens on infant mortality. It builds apartments where there is room for everything except the cradle. It designs cities

without playgrounds and substitutes hotels for homes. It limits the size of families and so reduces the birth rate. It draws profits from the toil of women who are with child and grudges rest and food to the nursing mother. It neglects childish ailments, puts the child to early work, or allows it to run wild in the streets, and then imprisons the first offender for crimes which are the fault of their persecutors. No, no, this parable of Everywoman is not to be dismissed as an ecclesiastical vision, remote from to-day. It shows what is happening in our own streets, by our doorsteps, and if you and I despise these little ones, let us be very sure that their lives which we have thus wronged are caught up to the very throne of God.

Baulked of her true place as queen of the home and ill-supported as the mother of the babe on which society depends, Everywoman wanders forth like Hagar into the wilderness. Where she might have been a Madonna, she is reduced to a machine minder, thankful thus to be fed by God's providence. If, however, she has few defenders on earth, in heaven at any rate her wrongs provoke warfare. The chivalry in which we are often lacking sweeps Michael and his angels into a tournament in which every heart of knightly courage goes forth to fight for Everywoman. Inch by inch, the Dragon is driven from heaven, so learning that there is no place for such as he in any region of human happiness. The fashions are changed and selfishness is run to earth.

Stirring up Strife.

In the strife we learn the devil's name. It is Satan, the deceiver, the liar, the author of every evil lure, of every unworthy trick of fashion, of every mean and

cunning artifice. And Satan's particular artifice is to accuse one brother to another. In every walk of life he spreads the doctrine of Cain, which is that men born of the same Everywoman are enemies, rivals, competitors, rather than comrades and friends. Brotherhood and Motherhood are one, and when nation is aroused against nation, each side bombards the cradles of the other. Once let men remember that they are all of one birth and you may then cry out that now is salvation come, for Satan's time is short. The very violence of our wars shows this. War is just working itself out to a sheer impossibility. Men are finding out that war is not as they imagined, a struggle between the strong, but the obliteration of the weak on both sides, and that soldiers cannot shed one another's blood without shedding afresh the blood of the Lamb.

Bereft of child and home, Everywoman is still pursued by the Dragon, who pours forth floods in the hope of carrying her off her feet. Trivial literature, an unworthy drama, endless petty tasks, all the artifices whereby the soul is discouraged are ruthlessly imposed, and when it seems that Everywoman must be submerged in the current, she discovers that she has angels' wings, that she can rise above the routine whether of drudgery or of pleasure, escape from silliness and from serfdom, and be nourished in her spirit during this time times and a half, this three and one-half days of the week when the drama of life is still incomplete. The floods of Satan do follow but in vain. They are absorbed by the soil and so swallowed up. The native common sense of the woman—her contact with duty—saves her from the rubbish with which it is sought to overwhelm her.

So defeated, Satan discovers his mistake in imagin-

ing that woman is the weaker sex. He is wroth to acknowledge the blunder. He therefore turns his attention to men, every one of whom after all had a mother once. To wound the triumphant mother through her son is the last revengeful artifice of the ultimately evil one. And in particular he concentrates upon the best of men, upon those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BEASTS ARISE

AND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

And I saw one of his heads, as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months.

* * * * * * *

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

* * * * * * *

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him.

* * * * * * *

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means* of those miracles which he had power to do.

* * * * * * *

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

—REVELATION 13: 1–17.

XVII

THE BEASTS ARISE

I SHALL now be asked pointblank what any sensible man in these days can possibly find in these visions of beasts and dragons and horns that will either interest his mind or help him to solve the problem of his existence. Unless I am able to meet this challenge fairly and squarely and without one hint of evasion, I may as well admit, as a journalist, that certain pages of the Bible had best be blue-pencilled, once for all, and relegated to the dust-heap of forgotten things. As a matter of fact, I can state with sincerity that, so far from finding these visions dull, I rather feel as if I were hot on the scent, like a detective seeking a clue to some mystery, nor have I ever *enjoyed* any book as much as I am enjoying this Apocalypse. I do not claim that this sensation of sheer pleasure is particularly pious. On the contrary, it is entirely human.

However astounding may be this story of the Beasts, somehow or other, a man called John of Patmos came to write it. Mad or sane, he got the words put down on paper. Mad or sane, scholars have translated them into every language on earth, and millions on millions of people, mad or sane, have read them. For myself, I am not at all surprised that John was so fond of the sea and the sand. Jesus also used to walk thus by the Lake and it was there that He made a friend of John.

To John, as to Jesus, and, indeed, all Jews, sand and sea were symbols, as familiar as flags and other symbols of that kind are to us. The sand recalled Abraham's seed—the people with faith—each person separate as a grain from others—yet the whole forming a solid floor on which you can rely. The sea, however, has no such firm consistency. To John, as to his colleague, Jude, it meant any society which has no faith, but is tossed about with any gust of wind, forming parties which change and disappear, as one moment passes into the next. The sea was thus this pathless, restess paganism, modern or ancient, and this is why in the city of God, when fully built, there will be no sea.

The Rise of Empires.

The disturbed waters of human life, like the ocean itself, breed organisms or "Beasts." Out of the unfathomed depths of our desires and our needs emerge institutions—Living Creatures—of which undoubtedly it was the Roman Empire that confronted John. Abraham Lincoln used to say that no nation is good enough to govern another, and he was right. No father is good enough to rear children. No teacher is good enough to instruct a class. No author is good enough to write books. No employer is good enough to order workmen. It is a grim business—this rule of man by man—and it is a sobering comment on Old Rome in her glory that as a simple man of the people, who had never held political office, John should have likened her boasted institutions to a Beast of Prey, of hideous and antediluvian proportions. That is a discovery which, reading newspapers, I find most pertinent.

Historians have marvelled at the seven heads and ten horns of European civilization. Here was an irresistible combination of intellect and material force. It mattered not that, from time to time, some head received a deadly wound. Carthage might strike at Rome. Mohammed might reach the gates of Vienna. Britain might lose her American Colonies. Spain might fall. Germany might be humiliated. But the nations of Africa and Asia, watching these calamities, would still ask one another—*Is there ever anything like this Beast? Who of us will be able to make war on him?* Here, indeed, was the supremacy of science in battle—the glory of crowns and kingdoms.

Their Cruelty and Display.

But John examined the Living Creature more closely, and he was not reassured. *Why,* he exclaimed, *it has the body of a leopard—the feet of a bear—and the mouth of a lion!* At heart, it is a wild beast. The leopard springs. The bear crushes. And the lion devours. You have there—first aggression, then tyranny, and finally plunder or taxation,—the three characteristics of imperialism.

Every nation is governed as it deserves. This beast was not imposed on the sea—it arose out of the sea. If it was corrupt and grasping and cruel, it was because such was the nature of the spawn in those waters. Institutions are the express product of men's thoughts, and nothing is here said about the pedigree of the beast, except that one thing—the ocean of life was its origin. Be it republican—be it royal—be it communist, the Beast could not have existed a day, except by popular consent.

The animal was amply decorated. On every horn

was a crown, the ruthless militarism was concealed beneath pageantry and display,—the glitter of a court —medals—ribands—fashion. But these artifices did not deceive John. With a calm and terrible demeanour, this last of the Hebrew prophets listened to what was said by the Beast—noted the names which the Beast assumed—and pronounced the whole business a blasphemy. Yet John was no anarchist. His was to be the loftiest ideal of civic law ever put upon paper. But he recognized that through social institutions, however impressive, the Serpent may utter deception. When a man sneers at honesty in public life he blasphemes God's name. When practical statesmen ignore missions and despise churches, they blaspheme God's tabernacle. When diplomatists forget the gallant dead who gave their lives for righteousness, they blaspheme them that live in God's heaven.

Commerce Develops.

This evil thing did not last forever. Only for forty-two months, or three and a half years—just half of the mystical week—does the Beast flourish. But his was none the less a terrible career while it lasted. Frankly opposing the saints, he overcame them. In the counsels of statesmen, the teachings of Christ had no influence at all. Yet, even here, things were working together for good. The influence of the Beast was bringing all kindreds and tongues and nations into contact and, even by a harsh discipline, mankind was finding in sorrow one home and one family.

The military civilization could not last. Communities organized for slaughter must themselves be slain of the sword. Empires, reducing others to captivity, must be themselves led captive. The old Beast be

came senile and a new creature arose, as powerful but less pretentious. It wore no crowns, but represented an improved kind of paganism—quiet, scientific, astoundingly inventive, so that its aeroplanes and the like, seemed to be great wonders. It was a creature that could even make fire come down from heaven, that could explode a depth bomb by means of a wireless impulse of electricity, so dazzling men's minds with the miracle of modern progress in the applied sciences. This second Beast was Commerce.

Old Forms Preserved.

Every power exercised formerly by monarchs and nobles and soldiers is transferred to the capitalist and the merchant and the trade union and the coöperative society. Yet, with a shrewdness that is almost uncanny, if I may employ such a word, John warns us that Commerce will endeavour to maintain the form or image of the old *régime,* the etiquette of fashion, which is exactly what is happening. Men become rich and buy peerages or marry their daughters into titled families or discover hitherto unsuspected coats of arms. The former aristocracy of birth and military power thus lives again in a new aristocracy of wealth and industrial power so that even in Moscow, you find the more exclusive ladies of the Bolshevist Court riding about in the best automobiles and wearing the most expensive furs.

Capital and Labour.

The tyranny of Commerce may be actually more exacting on the individual than the despotism of the old kings. Here is a system from which nobody, great or small, free or bond, rich or poor, can escape.

If you are to buy and if you are to sell, you must be part of the system, which will inevitably leave its mark on your right hand and your forehead, on your service and your ideals. The system is deceptive. It offers men happiness when it has no happiness to offer. The result is unrest. Rich men try to be richer. Poor men go on strike. Neither rich nor poor know what it is that they lack, which need is, as we shall see, simply a new vision of the Lamb on the mountain.

For by another daring stroke of insight, John realized that the institution of modern Commerce would have, not seven heads and ten horns, but only just two horns, and these quite enough. He had seen his own father in the boat on the shores of Galilee, mending the nets with the hired servants, and to him mastership and service were the essentials of industry. We use our own terms for the old relation, and "Capital" and "Labour" are the two horns on which all the operations of supply and demand depend. Capital and Labour are part of the same machine and neither can act without the other. Each may control the individual unfairly. The monopolist may say, You shall not buy except from me. And the trade union may answer, You shall not work except on my terms. On one side as on the other, you may have a complete forgetfulness of Him Who cried, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.*

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ARITHMETIC OF IT

HERE is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* six hundred threescore *and* six.

—REVELATION 13: 18.

XVIII

THE ARITHMETIC OF IT

YOU will now ask what John meant by saying that the number of the Beast was six hundred and sixty and six. He tells us to mark this number well, and it is clear that he attaches importance to it. The Vision contains many numbers. We read of the *four* beasts, of the *seven* churches, of the *twelve* gates, and so on, and one may here give an interpretation of John's arithmetic.

To begin with, he was an artist. Read the Arabian Nights, and you will find that in the tale of Ali Baba it was not enough for there to be many thieves; the thieves had to be forty. For Rudyard Kipling, it was not enough to write poems about several seas; the seas had to be seven. And when wise men came to the cradle of the Christ, mankind felt that the story lacked something unless their number was precisely three. Challenge the numerals of this Vision and you will find yourself up against the universal instinct of the ballad singer who from age to age has woven the tapestries of romance. In no day more than our own have numbers been more widely used as symbols. Dine at a vast hotel that towers over New York and ask for a lady in box thirteen. You will find that she is sitting in *Twelve A*. My own office is situated in a building from which floor thirteen is missing because the offices thereon could not have been let. You call

it superstition, and so it is, but what is the superstition? It is the subconscious echo of an original horror,—the horror over a supper party where thirteen men included both the Christ and the Iscariot. Never has Freemasonry been stronger than it is to-day, and in Washington, D. C., you will find a Temple of the Scottish Rite, where an elaborate architecture is subordinate to the number thirty-three.

By the mystery of numbers, generations uncountable have been fascinated. Of all the tales of Edgar Allan Poe perhaps the most popular is *The Gold Bug,* and why? Because Poe employed the artifice of sustaining interest in a cryptogram which he made the clue to great treasure. In certain stories of adventure by Rider Haggard, and in the detective masterpieces of Conan Doyle, a few words on a slip of paper have whetted curiosity. To find things out, to decipher the unknown,—it is the very essence of imagination. The trait to which these novelists appealed is akin to the wonder aroused by the Delphic Oracle, by the secret passage in an ancient castle, by historic mysteries like the diamond necklace of Queen Marie Antoinette, by the labours of scientists who by searching hope to find out what one day they will know to be God. Whatever man has dreamed, that will man seek to interpret. Whatever mountain man has discerned, that will he endeavour to climb. Whatever distance he has conceived, be it to the ultimate star in Orion, that distance will he try to measure.

Three

Reading the numerals in John's Vision, we note first that THREE is divine. The ancient Egyptians liked to have three deities in their temples. Man is himself

trinity. I am a father. I am a son. And I am a spirit. Put capitals to Father, Son and Spirit, and you reach God.

Four.

FOUR suggests the points of a compass, north, south, east and west. We read of the four corners of the earth and of the four walls to the Holy City. When four angels hold back four winds, it means universal tranquillity. And the four Living Creatures around the throne of God represent Creation, the entire world of living and breathing animal activity.

Twelve.

Now take the figure three and multiply it by four, and you have TWELVE. Here you arrive at the idea of a Creation into which God has entered. You have something that has been secular but has become spiritual. Thus you have the twelve tribes of a chosen Israel, the twelve chosen apostles, the twelve stars around the head of the eternal woman, the twelve gates to the city, which being holy is twelve thousand furlongs every way, and twelve times twelve cubits high, while the number of the redeemed are twelve times twelve thousand, led by twice twelve elders,—not apostles merely but twice that number, so as to include those blessed who not having seen with Thomas the print of the nails in His hands, have yet believed—women as well as men.

Ten.

TEN is the secular digit. Mention it and your thoughts turn to the decimal system, to the multiplication table, to ledgers and budgets and statistics and as-

tronomical calculations. On your fingers and on your toes you count in tens, and a tenth, or tithe, is the tax that you pay. Ten pieces of silver were in the parable the housewife's allowance from her husband. The tribes that broke away from Jerusalem were ten, and they are to-day that Judaism which is lost to the religious destiny of the chosen people. The millennium of a thousand years is thus a period of political law and order in the world, in which nations live at peace but without a personal devotion to the Christ. Such millennium therefore must break down, as a millennium did in 1914. As long as Satan is abroad in men's hearts we may have spells of civil tranquillity but we have yet to reach the golden city. A Beast with ten horns is dependent on secular force. And an army of two hundred thousand thousand is, again, an unconsecrated army, quite different in purpose from the redeemed, who are reckoned by twelves. The raising of tens into millions indicates how immense was the army. And the forty furlongs of bloodshed around the doomed city which slew the Olive Trees contrasts with the sacred twelves by which was measured the New Jerusalem.

Seven.

SEVEN is the perfect number. In every week, it is the seventh day that completes and hallows the other six. You do not perfectly forgive your brother unless you forgive him unto seventy times seven. Seven times did Elijah's servant scan the horizon ere he saw a cloud rise like unto a man's hand. Seven times must Naaman bathe in the Jordan ere his leprosy would be cleansed. There were seven churches in Asia, seven lamps on seven lampstands, and seven words by our

Saviour as He suffered on the Cross. Seven heads to a Beast signify complete knowledge—a perfect intellectual efficiency. If, then, John tells of some terrible creature having seven heads and ten horns, one gets the idea of some modern state, with a head to think, and with a horn to push, a sevenfold or perfect intelligence combined with an elaborate power to rule, just such a state as the Roman Empire or as Germany before the war, or as any country may be after the war in which there is dependence on efficiency alone, whether of brain or of muscle.

Six.

Six is the number that just falls short of seven. The spearhead of Goliath weighed six hundred shekels, his height was six cubits and a span. He was the living embodiment of imperialism and courage, who had still to learn that imperialism is not enough. By taking thought, he had just failed to add that seventh cubit to his stature.

Six Hundred and Sixty-six.

So approached, the oft-quoted number of the beast which has puzzled so many learned commentators almost translates itself. Here you have an organism that includes rich and poor, small and great, free and bond, which sets its mark on the right hands and on the foreheads of men, branding their service and branding their ideals, even settling what they shall buy and what they shall sell, and the number of the organism is six hundred and sixty and six. It is a civilization, wonderful, elaborate, scientific, which, however, just falls short of God, a society where there is labour without prayer, culture without Scripture, songs with-

out Psalms, rules without reverence. As Browning puts it:

> "Oh! the little more, and how much it is,
> And the little less, and what worlds away."

The whole aim of the Good Newsvendors is to change that six hundred and sixty and six into seven hundred and seventy and seven.

Twelve Hundred and Sixty.

So we may read the meaning of various periods of time. A week is the perfect scope of evolution. In a week, the world was created. What Daniel called "time, times and a half" meant one plus two plus a half or three and a half days which bisects the week. We think sometimes that the half week is the whole. In the days of Elijah, there was a drought that lasted not for three and a half days but for three and a half years, or forty-two months. Among the first disciples, so fierce was the persecution that they had to endure that they counted the forty-two weeks in days and said wearily that there were one thousand and two hundred and sixty of these cheerless mornings and anguished nights. *Light affliction that is for a moment!* they seemed to cry, *Why, it seems to us to go on forever.* Yet in actual truth, the half week was not the whole story. It was doubtless the battle, but beyond it lay the victory.

When we are told that Everywoman shall be fed in the wilderness for twelve hundred and sixty days, that the military beast from the ocean shall rule for forty-two months, and that the olive trees shall lie desolate for three and a half days, we have the same symbol—half of seven days or years—the incomplete period of God's providence,—with the other half still to come.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAMB ON THE MOUNT

AND I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

—REVELATION 14: 1–12.

XIX

THE LAMB ON THE MOUNT

AS one looks at the Lamb of God, standing there on Mount Zion, one must remember how it was this same John who told us that Our Father loves not the white races only, but the whole world. Of this our Bible, not one single line was of European origin —every syllable came from Asia, and while it is natural for us to say that the Dragon and the Beast are pictures of the Roman Empire or Kaiserdom or Papacy, we must not expect that the black man and the yellow man will read his Bible in our history books. What interest has the Hindu in the Spanish Armada or the Chinaman in the massacre of St. Bartholomew's? The Chinaman is brooding over the Boxer Rebellion and the dethronement of the Manchus, while the Hindu meditates upon the mutiny and the Moslem incursions. As for the negro, with his strange passion for the spiritual, Armageddon may be for him the Civil War which secured liberty and citizenship.

Reading this Apocalypse, merely as a layman, I do not find therein any obvious and unmistakable schedule of future events, to occur one after the other at fixed and predetermined dates. There may be in these chapters cryptograms and cross-references of which I am unaware, but taking the Vision simply, I gather

that at the very moment when one nation may be cruelly oppressed by the Beast and the Dragon, another may be worshipping the Lamb on Mount Zion. We have seen Germany exchanging the music of Mozart for a hymn of hate and the gospel of Luther for a mailed fist. But a land less favoured in intellect than Germany—the Kingdom of Uganda—was employing this very period in destruction of idols, abandonment of savagery and adoption of the Christian faith. There you have a challenging contrast between simple men saved by worshipping the Lamb and clever men ruined by worshipping the Beast. With Christ it has been better to wear a black skin in Africa than without Him to wear a white skin in Europe.

Sacrifice or Success.

According to John, endowed as he was with the mystical mind of the East, the Roman Empire and the Western civilization which has been erected upon its majestic ruins were a system, a Beast, which Christ had to confront and to conquer. You would have thought, perhaps, that the Saviour, assailed by the blasphemies of society, must stand forth with an overwhelming display of power as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His purple must be, surely, more gorgeous than the purple of princes and his diadem must outflash the most brilliant of crowns. But it was not the Christ of a historic prestige, of an elaborate ceremonial, of a resplendent art, who now appeared upon Mount Zion. It was Christ in His humblest guise—the Lamb—obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, Who stood there, making once more His mute appeal for the love of men and women. As Sufferer, He said nothing; He was silent as a Crucifix—dumb

as a sheep before her shearers. Yet even the most careless knew that He was standing there all the time waiting, and in the highest place.

For His alternative to the worship of Success is His own Sacrifice, His own Service. He claims the millionaire and the millionaire becomes a missonary. He lays hands on the millions and, by miracle, luxury is curbed and hospitals rise from unseen foundations. Of the two ideals, Success is less noble than Sacrifice. The Beast emerged from the sea, crawling upon its belly, and they who worship the Beast must descend to sea level. But the Lamb is only to be found in the mountain. His throne must be a sacred city. And worship of the Lamb means climbing constantly upward, from rock to rock, from ridge to ridge, until you find at the top plenty of room, since coming to Him no one is cast out.

Commerce and Christianity.

There are days in which much is said about the conflict between Commerce and Christianity. The fact is that Commerce is just exactly what you make it. Like that second Beast with the two horns, it may be mild as a lamb. It is then a mutual service between friend and friend, and therefore it resembles the service of Christ Who was friend of all. But Commerce also is apt to speak like a dragon or serpent. It leaves a trail of trickery—of secret rebates and commissions, the short weights which are an abomination unto the Lord—the unavowed profits—the unequal price—the withholden wage. And it was just here that the worshippers of the Lamb were distinguished from the worshippers of the Beast. They were straightforward. They told the whole truth. In their mouth, as in Na-

thaniel's, there was no guile. They did not speak as a serpent.

In a mark or brand on the hand and forehead, there is no disgrace. All life, whether of toil or pleasure, leaves behind its signature. It is the kind of mark that matters. The Beast was after a monopoly of material things—that nobody should buy or sell except with his mark. But the Lamb wrote a Father's name on men's foreheads. He taught us to be brothers and sisters in a family—that trade is really housekeeping on a large scale, in which there is one larder for all who are hungry. The ideals of competition developing into monopoly gradually changed into ideals of coöperation. Many nations and kindreds and tongues began to be animated by one impulse and to sing one song. It was a new song, never heard before, and only to be learnt in one key. The song of mutual help is known only to those who have first worshipped the free sacrifice of Himself by Our Saviour.

John is describing here a time of great perplexity. Terrible as had been the former wars and persecutions, they were hardly so dangerous to faith as the steady daily pressure of secular life in a modern community. Yet the disciples, known to Christ by their names, still numbered one hundred and forty and four thousands. Not alone when the Church was poor and despised did men prove faithful. Not alone in the amphitheatre did they triumph. They stood the final test of the Stock Exchange and Wall Street and the wheat pit of Chicago.

For with every generation, the music of the redeemed gains in depth and grandeur. At first it is but a song from the unaccompanied throats of men and women, but now there are harps and harpers. Faith

has her orchestra of which the dominating instrument —a harp—contrasts sharply with the jazz of brass bangs, so barbaric, cruel, obtrusive, delirious. Such madness, whether of dance or paint or journalism or politics, is rebuked by the tender tone-throbs of the harp-strings, deep yet gentle and modest, lingering with the long touch of human fingers and sustained from moment to moment by the wandering wind of the Omnipresent. Rich indeed have been these times of ours in Christian Art—the oratorio, reverent and moving poems, glowing pictures,—even dramas. While the Beasts rise from the sea, the harpers are changing homes into heaven.

Among the disciples of this latter day were seen two virtues—Chastity and Obedience—standing before God's throne. Men dared not wrong a woman. Despite social evils, divorces and scandals, chivalry gained ground. Motherhood was safeguarded. And there were constantly fresh applications of Christ's teaching. It was not enough that Christ should be obeyed on Sundays and in religious matters, so called. Men realized that they must follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. No sacrifice was too great. The influence of Our Lord was felt in banks and in Parliaments; He was seen in housing schemes; He was heard in appeals for starving Europeans. Even in business His Will began to be recognized. There were actually disciples in whose lives the eye of God found no fault, so complete was their redemption, so whole-hearted was their sense of duty.

CHAPTER XX

THE THREE ANGELS

AND I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

—REVELATION 14:6–12.

XX

THE THREE ANGELS

THE first and foremost fact that John of Patmos declares is—throughout his Vision—simply this—God speaking to man. By trumpets and thunders and the still small voice, by the song of praise and the mysteries of pain, the Father is seeking the obedient love of the family. Here, for instance, are these three angels, flying through the heavens where all can see them and speaking in a voice that all can hear. Theirs is a message, at once instantaneous and universal, not to churches but to mankind—*to every nation and kindred and tongue and people*—a message immediately translated and immediately transmitted. One hundred years ago, it seemed sheer vision—the imagination of a miracle. But now, with the telegraph and the telephone and with wireless, all of them thus claimed as agencies of the Lord above us, the wonder is an actuality of every day. The prophecy is fulfilled.

The Gospel Preached.

It was not this time a flying eagle, sweeping over the world with a wail of woe. Instead of such pessimism, we have in *the first angel* a missioner of hope, who preaches *the everlasting gospel,* the good news that is never stale, calling on men, not to make religion at-

tractive, but *to fear God,* as the beginning of wisdom, because the hour is coming for *judgment,* for a final decision on issues of right and wrong.

Society Shaken.

The second angel utters in advance a warning which, as we shall see, was amplified later. *Your great Babylon,* says he, your social system with its follies, its pleasures and its cruelties, *has fallen*—he repeats it—*has fallen, that great city, fallen as Rome fell, because she made all nations, even those which did not share her luxuries and vices, drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication, share the abuses of her selfishness, the white man's temptations, his tyrannies over the weaker races, his use of others for his own purposes.* A shaken society thus vindicated an everlasting gospel which had not been obeyed.

Each of Us Warned.

The third angel, still more insistent, addressed each person as an individual. He does not trouble himself about the air, the earth and the sea, about Babylon and the nations, but begins with Any Man—and from that there is no escape. *If any man,* he cries,—*with the gospel preached and Babylon fallen—still worships this beast and his image, still lives for money and social prestige, if he still allows himself to be stamped or branded on hand and forehead with the mark of the beast,—if he does that in business which sears his soul and degrades thought and habit—then that same man, he and none else, shall inevitably suffer. Not other nations only, but he—Any Man—shall drink the wine of wrath, poured out without mixture or dilution into the cup of God's indignation. Reigns of terror or*

torment shall follow reigns of tyranny, not because of devilry, but in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb,—Him Who said of the unkind to children, that it were better for them that a millstone had been tied about their neck and they cast into the sea. Worship the beast and his image, receive his mark, and you will have no rest day or night, and if your rebellion goes on for ever and ever, so also will the smoke of your torment, your remorse and anguish. You cannot serve God and Mammon and if it takes eternity, you will have to learn that lesson. An eternal rebellion means inevitably an eternal punishment. *Here*—says John of Patmos,—*is the patience of the saints, the men who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*—namely, that God will never surrender to Any Man but that Every Man, if he is to be included among the happy, must surrender to God.

So much for the three angels. Their flight and their message show that "an open Bible" is not enough. The little book may be held in the hand of a giant who stands astride the world. It may be available to all, but read by none. Living epistles are also needed—the evangelist, the critic, the judge—all bearing witness, with the Book, to the Christ. The Bible, so far from being a Koran, written once for all in a fixed language, must be carried by teachers everywhere, and interpreted, and made one's own, and offered to one's generation.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SOULS OF THE DEAD

AND I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

—REVELATION 14: 13–20.

XXI

THE SOULS OF THE DEAD

IT was a voice from the throne—the voice of Our Lord Himself—that commanded John of Patmos, here and now, to write of the life after death. With his own eyes he had seen Christ risen, and Christ alone was to him a full proof that in Christ he would live forever. Believing in heaven and in hell, in angels and in devils and the soul, John does not once in his Vision give us a message from departed Apostles, like his brother James, or Paul. From all that radiant throng, he selects but one Subject for a portrait and He, thus depicted, is the Redeemer.

To John, with his accurate knowledge of Scripture, spiritualism was as old as Moses, who rudely condemned a wizard or a medium to death. Having studied Isaiah, he knew what that prophet thought of those who peep and mutter at *séances* instead of seeking after God Himself, where He may be found and calling upon Him while He is near. So in his picture of future blessedness, John insists that those we love are *at rest from their labours,* and must not be disturbed as Saul disturbed Samuel, when he consulted the witch of Endor. It is *their works that follow them*—not their ghosts—the buildings they have raised, the books they have written, the families they have raised, the liberties which they established. John reverses the pessimism of Mark Antony. The evil that

men do is cut off like Babylon and burnt with fire, but the good, so far from being interred with their bones, lives on forever.

Yet it is not wrong to look earnestly into the unseen. Many times did John thus gaze, and always did he discern some new glimpse of God and His purposes. It is not wrong to listen for voices hitherto drowned in the nearer clamour of the world. John also listened—John also heard. But what he constantly desired was the further—the fuller appearing of Jesus Christ. Nothing less than this would satisfy a man of the common people, who lived in broad daylight, not in a darkened salon, who loved the open air, the sky, the stars, the clouds, and who was facing poverty, exile and a constant risk of martyrdom. In the faith of such a man, there was no room for nonsense, no niche for superstition. What burst upon him was *the Son of Man with the sharp sickle.*

Many years before this Vision, Jesus had told John about the end of the age as a harvest, with sheaves to be gathered into the garner of God. It is, I suppose, a simple scientific proposition that the wheels of this our solar system, now revolving with such exquisite accuracy, would, if left to themselves, one day run down like a clock that needs winding. If that happened this trivial speck of dust which we call our planet, slowly but surely cooling after its primeval heats, would lose forever those living tenants whose souls have rendered this little world illustrious. Such an astronomical culmination would be, of course, remote indeed by our reckoning of the calendar, and the immediate question for us is in what sense we shall ourselves have to face *"an end of the age"* or era in which we live.

We should remember that harvest goes on all the year round. Every hour of every day of every season, some one somewhere is sowing or reaping or binding the sheaves. With us it may be only spring, but with others it is already autumn, and John did not wait a million years ere he saw the Son of Man and the angels wielding sharp sickles. *Lift up your eyes,* Our Lord used to say, *the fields are already white unto harvest.* Glance over any statistics of births, deaths and marriages and you will see for yourself how true this is. Never has the angel of death been busier in the world than he is to-day.

The Finality of Death.

The sickles are always sharp. Death, in whatever form, is, at the end, a guillotine that cuts quite clean. For good as for bad people, it is the same stroke. And while the severance may not be forever, it is absolute while it lasts. Once reaped the grain leaves the field, never to return—the grapes cannot be restored by any occult art to the vine. No spiritualist can cement those communications which the sickle has parted. Here is a decision which no man can dispute.

In death, as in life, men's circumstances are affected by their attitude towards Our Saviour. Those who love Him as John did, see that the sharp sickle is actually in none other than His own pierced hand. On His head, the crown of thorns is changed into a crown of gold. He has conquered death; and if He uses the sickle it is not of necessity, but because even that sickle becomes, in His grasp, a blessing. We sorrow—we weep—but we would not have had it otherwise. For there is in these words of John a

most delicate expression of Our Lord's tender mercy to His own. They who cared little for the Son of Man only saw in Death *an angel,*—old Father Time with his scythe, it may be—but to the disciples who followed the Lamb whithersoever He went Death is no Angel—he is the Lord Himself—and however cruel the thrust of the sickle may seem to be, He alone, in His loving wisdom, dealt the blow.

For it is not now as King of Kings and Lord of Lords that we see Him sitting there, enthroned on the bright cloud of His divinity. To those whose blinds are drawn and voices hushed, Christ, even when risen and ascended, comes as of old—still *the Son of Man,* who trod the highways of Galilee, who raised the son of the widow at Nain, who awakened the daughter of Jairus and wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He is the Friend who comforts even when, in love, He strikes. We deal with Him alone and with none other.

Christ the Reaper.

We have thus to accept Him, not always as Christ Scientist, the Healer, but as *Christ the Reaper.* It is not enough to trust Him when He cures us. That was where in his old age King Hezekiah failed. Even though He slay us, yet should we trust in Him. For if we look closely at this Vision, we shall see that the Son of Man, here rising before us as the Conqueror of Death, still displayed even in that triumph the humility in which He became obedient unto the Cross. Jesus is manifest on the cloud; but He still wears our human nature. He still acknowledges the authority of His Father, shrouded within the Temple of Heaven which was not yet swept away. Still were there times and seasons which the Son of Man knew not. Still

did He receive, as in Gethsemane, messages from the angels. If He submitted to those decrees, may not we? However hard may seem to be Our Father's destiny for us, we have, as it were, the guarantee of our Elder Brother that the sharp sickle in His hand is only wielded in utter mercy.

Applied to a field of grain, the word "*ripe*" means "dried." The stalks are cut because the sap is out of them. The opportunity is exhausted. Death is better than decay and it was Paul's desire to enter the harbour like a ship in full sail—with an abundant sweep of canvas. While the stalk may wither,—may indeed be threshed to dust—the grain survives and within the grain is eternal life.

So concludes, for the moment, John's picture of death as it falls on those who follow Christ in the duties of each day, until the end comes. They are the wheat—a grain humbler far than the mustard seed which grows into a mighty tree,—a democratic grain, for in a cornfield there are millions of ears, none overtopping the other. But there are in human society *vineyards* as well as cornfields. There is the life that is luxurious as a fruit, rather than regular and useful as a cereal. Men can live without grapes. They cannot live without bread. And the Jews, therefore, constantly employed the term, vineyard, as a symbol of pleasure, either hallowed or profane.

The Forty Furlongs.

They who live for themselves are like those clusters of ripe grapes. When death overtakes them, they see only the dread angel. Not for them is the sharp sickle held in the hand of a Friend and a Saviour. Before the Temple there is *an altar of fire*. That fire

is tended by *an angel* appointed for the purpose. Not unmoved is the Father's heart when His children forget Him—despise and oppress one another—seize more than their share of His good gifts—and change His vine into the alcohol of lust and greed and passion. Here also sweeps the sickle.

In the harvest of grain, not a word is said of terror. But when the vineyard is levelled to the ground, men's hearts fail them. The day has come when they must leave the city where so many have been their enjoyments. In hotels and theatres, in clubs and cabarets, dead men and women are not wanted. Away into the country are they sent—to those very cornfields of duty which they neglected—and we read then of the winepress. For the first time, they must yield to others whatever of value they have. Their selfishness must be trampled out. And if need be, their blood must be shed.

Many times has the world witnessed such a crushing of wealth and extravagance by the conscience of the community. It happened in revolutionary Paris. It happened again in Russia. The aristocrats in those lands would have no difficulty in interpreting these tremendous images of social upheaval. They knew well enough what was meant by that area of *forty furlongs square,* in which lay the city of terror. They knew what scramble there was for *horses*—for any vehicle—by which the refugee might hurry into the safety of exile beyond. To escape from the winepress—that was the only thought—yet how few did escape! With the guillotine busy as the firing squad, death seized *the very bits of the horses*—blood itself made the exodus impossible. Society—polite, cultured, cynical—had to learn that there is no escape from moral

responsibility. You cannot order your coachman or chauffeur to drive you beyond the frontiers of your obligation to God and man. With the tide rising around you the forty times forty furlongs cannot thus be traversed. Lash your horses as you will—not in them lies your hope of salvation. There was blood, once shed, which would have helped you. There was One Who—Himself cast out of the city as you are—suffered beyond the gates and at His Cross you might have found your safety.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SEVEN VIALS

AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues.

* * * * * * *

And the seven angels came out of the temple, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials, full of the wrath of God.

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power.

* * * * * * *

And the first angel went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast.

And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man.*

And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

* * * * * * *

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain.

* * * * * * *

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

* * * * * * *

And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake.

* * * * * * *

And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent.

—REVELATION 15 and 16.

XXII

THE SEVEN VIALS

IT is said that you cannot indict a nation. Yet John of Patmos had now to enter a supreme court where all nations are indicted, and if in describing these *great and marvellous* scenes, he had struck one false note, he would have made his Vision ridiculous. As the company of heaven testified, the tribunal was great and marvellous because so also was the Judge. It was for the Judge alone that John made record. It was a case where a prophet must be either foolish or infallible.

Doubtless that phrase, *the wrath of God,* has made the Bible unpopular. The only question is, however,—does it tell the truth? We like to think that it was only the gods of Greece and Rome who showed anger, but Our Lord Himself was also thus moved and it was John, to whom *God is Love,* who tells us also of *the wrath of God.* Indeed, he even adds—*and of the Lamb,* so finding indignation in the heart of Him Who, when they nailed Him to the Cross, prayed, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* Jesus did not abolish the thunders of Mount Sinai. In the desert, if you prefer it to the Promised Land, Mount Sinai still casts its shadow on uneasy consciences. What Jesus provided in Mount Calvary was an alternative.

Years before, John was among those who would have called down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village which rejected Christ. It was Elijah's idea of judgment and on a world where lightning flashes, it cannot be wrong. But what Jesus did was simply to leave the village, knowing well that His absence is the ultimate retribution. As Son of Man, a title carefully chosen on that occasion, He came first not to destroy men's lives but to save them, and not until salvation has been fully offered, does He bring our race into judgment.

In the Jewish, as in all faiths, there were three periods: first, when the priest brought from the tabernacle a blessing for the people; secondly when, like Zecharias, the priest has lost his voice and is dumb; and thirdly when, like these seven angels, he can offer, even in the incense of prayer, naught save a plague. Here was, in fact, John's last glimpse of the Temple. There is much in the world to condemn, but when there is in Religion only condemnation, then something greater must arise—the City of God, where, says John, no Temple is to be seen, or regretted.

The Victorious Faithful.

In the sunset glow of an era, far advanced, *the sea of glass* is now *mingled with fire.* The clear sincerity of primitive faith is radiant with a warm enthusiasm. It is the Red Sea across which Moses the Deliverer led the children of Israel. At first, that sea of glass had been untenanted, a virgin hope between earth and heaven. Then, it had been disturbed by Emergent Beasts—Military and Imperial and Commercial Organisms—All Highest Kaisers and Almighty Dollars. But now—where Peter walked those waters alone

with Christ—there are a multitude of people who have *gained the victory over the Beast,* whose natures are *unscathed by his mark,* whose minds are *undeceived by his image*—his pretensions, his advertisements and his propaganda, whose courage is *unappalled by his number,* that complicated six hundred and sixty and six which is always one short of seven, the divine and the perfect. These disciples, rested from their sorrows, could now make music on *the harps of God.*

The Three Songs.

It was the third song heard by John in heaven. First, there had been the anthem of Creation. Next, they sang the new Song of Salvation. And now the Song is of victory, sung by those who have fought the good fight, finished their course and kept the faith. It was *a Song of Moses, servant of God and of the Lamb*—one harmony between him who gave the Law and the Greater One Who fulfilled it for us all. The ocean of life that overwhelms Pharaoh and all tyrants sustains those who *follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, even on those waters.* It is *great and marvellous* and God's *judgments are made manifest—just and true.*

The Seven Angels.

Of that High Court of Heaven, *the doors were now thrown open.* Here was to be a public trial of mankind, with nothing concealed. The seven angels, terrible in beauty, came forth, *clothed in pure and white linen,* a priesthood of righteousness without redemption, not one touch on those robes of the blood that atones. *Golden* as truth were *the girdles on their breasts,* but no steel had pierced the hearts within.

Mankind must learn what it is to face facts, with the Saviour refused.

It was an Elder who had told John of the Lamb of God who prevailed to open our book of life. But the Elders,—having so testified and, for so many, in vain—are now silent. It is from one of the four beasts that the angels received their vials of wrath—from the creatures that symbolize natural science. The plagues are simply what doctors call " nature taking revenge." Not in the churches would you see this, but in hospitals, in asylums, in courts of bankruptcy and divorce, in poorhouses,—wherever life flaunts failure. We have thus to learn that while laws may be broken, God *liveth for ever and ever.*

They who obeyed the Christ found rest and safety from their sufferings under the altar within the throne. But, refusing Him, men discovered that heaven was still Sinai, an unapproachable temple, where you saw God's *glory* and His *power,* but not His love, where was a cloud of smoke that you could not enter, as did the Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration, until plagues be fulfilled. As Christ told us, somehow or other, the uttermost farthing must be paid. John heard *a great voice out of the temple*—a voice of unchallengeable authority—saying to the angels—*Go your ways*—fulfil the laws of science and nature—*and pour out the vials of the wrath of God on the earth.*

The First Vial.

The emptying of the first vial reveals our trouble as Isaiah saw it—a malady, a disease, a something within us that breaks forth in *a noisome and grievous sore*—in a word, personal and individual sin. Every doctor knows what this means, the life that is threat-

ened by evil living; it is a judgment, reflected pitilessly in the statistics of insurance. The late hours, the wasteful food, the liquor, the vice, the worry of mind, the hatreds and malice, all the indulgences which are contrary to law, and all the laws which are contrary to God's will, result in pain and disgrace and a wretched degradation of man, born in His image. Worshipping the image of the beast, man repudiates the image of God in which he was created—his own Paternity.

The Second Vial.

With man corrupt, institutions decay, becoming as a corpse in the midst of the ocean, itself dead and killing the life in others. This followed *the second vial;* once more a perfect picture of the church, the throne, the republic, the university, which has lost its vitality, yet cannot be removed, but cumbers the nations with abuses and offences, all derivable from the selfishness of individuals composing those moribund organisms. No system, however perfect, can survive for long the sin of the souls within it.

The Third Vial.

When the third angel empties his vial, the rivers and fountains of waters are turned to blood. The words that men speak and write and the thoughts that they think, which should be, in Christ, a well within them, springing up into eternal life, are changed into a perversion that is deadliest poison—a corrupt press, a decadent literature, a demoralized art, a degraded drama. And *the angel of the waters*—a perfect symbol for literary and dramatic criticism—admits that the fault lies, not with God but with man. *He*

Who is and has been and will be, Who sees the long annals of mankind as one connected story, is righteous, because He has thus judged man's intellect and tastes. The passion which sheds the blood of saints and prophets does not exhaust itself with that crime. The piety of the saints who fulfil the good and the vision of the prophets who discover it cannot be destroyed or ignored without the practice and vision of evil becoming the alternative. *They that shed blood must drink it.* And so far from the Saviour dissenting, there is heard from the very altar of His sacrifice a voice saying to the angel of the waters, *Even so.*

The Fourth Vial.

The fourth vial is emptied upon the sun—the source of natural blessings, whose rays ripen the corn and enrich the grape. That which should warm and invigorate, *now scorches men with fire and a great heat, so that they blaspheme the name of God,* instead of blessing Him. The achievements of science—what are they? The same steel is fashioned into a ploughshare and a bayonet. The same dynamite blasts rock into stone for the mason and scatters the edifices which have been built out of the stone. All material things may be used or misused and until men repent—change their allegiance—the misuse will continue.

The Fifth Vial.

The fifth vial is emptied on *the seat of the Beast.* Secular authority disappears. What had been a kingdom becomes darkness—a dark age, as we say, sets in. Over every continent, you will find traces of civilizations which have thus disappeared. Men have created comforts for themselves, but cannot of themselves

preserve them. Rome and Russia and much of Europe have known what it is to *gnaw the tongue in agony of social dissolution.* Over and over again, countries thus collapse, yet *without repentance.* The mind is still set upon other objects of worship than the Christ. The problem of happiness remains, therefore, still unsolved.

The Sixth Vial.

The sixth angel empties his vial *on the River Euphrates*—that great river of imperialism—of which we have already heard. And *the river is dried up.* Nay more, *the Kings of the East appear with a highway plain before them.* For centuries, the West with its power over the material had dominated the East, with its mysticism. But the time would come, slowly but surely, when the East must assert authority even over the West. A divided and disgraced Europe cannot hold permanent sway over Asia. Since the East sent Wise Men to worship the Redeemer, so will the East send Kings against those who disobey the Redeemer. If the West forgets the Christ and the East, at long last, finds Him, then it follows that His authority will be exercised through the nations which recognize it.

The fact, therefore, that we must face is this—there is in the judgment of the Almighty no privilege of West over East. If the East obeys the Gospel, it will advance inevitably against the West, if the West disobeys the Gospel. Neither climate, nor history, nor race will prevail against that supreme, determining factor—*what think ye of Christ?* We must not suppose that the decline of religion, say in London or Paris or Berlin, means the end of Christ's mission on earth. The danger is not to Christ but to Berlin,

Paris and London. Apostasy did not shake God's throne, but as we shall see, it did destroy Babylon.

The Three Frogs.

Armageddon and *the three frogs* anticipate the seventh vial. As there is a trinity of good—Fatherhood, Sonship and Holiness of Spirit,—so there is a trinity of the bad; an orphaned World, an unbrotherly Flesh, and a Spirit of the Devil. There is three times, Holy, and there is three times, Woe. Three times was Christ tempted in the desert, and in the garden three times did He pray. Three times did Peter deny Him and three times was Peter commanded to feed the Good Shepherd's flock. All that God is and does meets with resistance among men.

Evil is here described as, first, a serpent, next a beast and finally a false prophet. The *serpent* or devil is father of lies as God is Father of Truth. The *beast* is, as we have seen, the World, a civilization inspired by lies, a godless state and nation, the negative to Christ, the Son. The *false prophet* is whatever in man's mind contradicts and repudiates the Spirit, imagining what is not and blind to what is.

The Reptile Press.

Out of the mouth of serpent, beast and false prophet leap *three frogs.* It suggests the grotesquerie of the middle ages, laughable but grimly true. John recalled how Egypt in all the pride of pyramids and temples and palaces had been humbled by the loathsome intimacies of the frog. At first, wickedness is impressive; you see the crowns on the ten horns of the beast; you wonder at the pomps of paganism. But as one judgment follows another, how mean becomes the

evil we admire! The scandals at court, the vanities of the great, the avarice of the successful, the little tricks of every trade,—how despicable! All the philosophies and conquests are reduced to the mouthings of what we call, repeating John's simile, "a reptile press," petty, ever on the jump, ever leaving a trail of malice and jealousy and hate. And ever *working miracles,* searching for a sensation, feeding the community with excitement, stirring up war, gathering nations to battle. It is, indeed, a picture, stern, ironic, contemptuous, of modern jingoism and triviality.

When the seals were opened, the first fact to be dealt with was War—shown in the four horses of the Apocalypse. But John has since looked into life more deeply. And he now reveals War not as a first but as a fifth plague, as the result and summation of evil, not as the beginning of it, as a crime to which men are stirred up and driven, and surrender themselves, not as a mere sudden event.

Armageddon.

The world has many famous battle-fields—Austerlitz, Waterloo, Gettysburg,—but to the Jew, the fortress and plains of Megiddo, where Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera, represented the national memory of triumph. Armageddon is this Megiddo, a place of agonizing conflict where, however, the victory is with the right. Wicked as are wars, the battle where men thus strive is none the less *that great day of God Almighty.* Alexander and Napoleon and Moltke may be there as generals, but the day is not their day. *Behold,* says John, *Look*—amid the flame and smoke comes One, silent and unexpected as a thief,—One Who seems to have no place there—the Friend of

soldiers under fire,—claiming His own. Even in armies, He has His sentinels watching. *Happy are they when thus they do watch.* His garments do they wear as uniform lest they march into battle *naked of hope and faith and courage, and others see their shame.*

And so *the seventh angel* empties his vial, not on earth, sea, fountains or sun, but *into the air*—what men breathe—their atmosphere—what we call public opinion. The climax of misery is in the mind—is social unrest—breaking into revolution. Deal with the mind and will and there is nothing left to deal with—*a great voice out of the temple and the throne says, It is finished.* Those words, *It is finished,*—where had John first heard them? He himself tells us. There was a great voice from the Cross that cried, *It is finished.* There was an uttermost obedience of Christ as there is an uttermost disobedience of Society. It is the final challenge between our Self-seeking and His Self-Sacrifice.

The theory that nations are held together by rejecting ideals and clinging to the material was never supported by John. He tells of *voices,* first, that is revolutionary propaganda. Then *thunders and lightnings*—the sudden insurrection or bomb-throwing that leaves things as they were; and finally of an unexampled *earthquake,* or upheaval, involving not one nation only but all nations, Babylon being universal as sin. Empires are split up *into three parts;* their cities like Vienna and Petrograd fall. And what should have been a trinity in social unity becomes a trinity shattered by social dissension. *Islands flee away*—those convenient and protected oases where in universities and similar communities we like to cherish, undisturbed, our favourite culture; and *mountains are not*

found—all privileges, whether of birth or of brain or of wealth, are swept away. What comes into *God's remembrance* is *Great Babylon,* the nations as a whole; and as citizens we are all held responsible—we have all played our part. And on men's heads fell *the plague of hail*—a gentle rain frozen hard by unkindly winter—the constant shower of adverse circumstances —men competing instead of coöperating—hitting instead of helping—a plague of uncharity, of cheating, of mistrust. Every act *about the weight of a talent,*—weighed, that is, in terms of money,—£. *s. d.,*—dollars—francs—Judas Iscariot's thirty pieces of silver returning with compound interest; a plague *exceeding great,* which hammers every generous emotion to the dust, corrupting games themselves, and causing the very athletes to walk crooked—a marvellous picture of high prices and crushing taxation.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RUIN OF BABYLON

AND there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

* * * * * * *

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:

* * * * * * *

And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.

* * * * * * *

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

* * * * * * *

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

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—REVELATION 17, 18: 1-6.

XXIII

THE RUIN OF BABYLON

THE seven seals have been opened, the seven trumpets have sounded and the seven vials are empty, and we have now to watch, in one completed drama, the fall of Babylon and the rise of the New Jerusalem. As a student of the Jewish prophets, John of Patmos was familiar with their habit of declaring "the burden" of surrounding nations, of Edom and Nineveh and Tyre—a burden of sin and misery and wrong—a burden borne by many a nation to-day. Living in the Roman Empire, John saw Babylon, not as one city or country but as an international organism, embracing *peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.* To Babylon, the frontiers were not geographical but economic, moral, spiritual. Babylon was served by a mercantile marine, with *ship-masters, a company* or passengers, and *crews. Merchants* conducted her trade and for bullion and ornament she had *silver and gold.* In the record of that trade, by an ominous perversion, luxuries for the few are allowed precedence over necessities for the many, while the claims of the soul come last. We begin with *precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet and all sweet woods,* for inlaying furniture, *and all manner vessels of ivory,* for my lady's dressing table, *and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron,*

and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense,—quite like an advertisement of a great retail business!—and only after this do we come to *wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep.* Even militarism—*horses and chariots*—comes late in the list, as if the final danger to society were not the sacrifices of war but the indulgences of peace. And finally as an ironic afterthought, we have mentioned *the bodies and souls of men.* Not a word of the poor, except this; not a word of worship or redemption or missions or Christ. There was now no place for Him, not even in the Inn—now grown to be great hotels.

The Lady of Fashion.

As a simple fisherman, so born and bred, whose pure mind saw God even in the Roman Empire, John of Patmos gives us two Visions of Womanhood. Of the first, we have read in chapter twelve—Everywoman—glorious in motherhood, natural in her instincts, yet driven from pillar to post by social conditions. To John, who, like Jesus, dwelt among common folk, that picture came easily enough. He had now to learn that all women are not thus madonnas and that there is also to be faced the Lady of Fashion. Everywoman was persecuted; this Lady is pampered. The dragon pursued Everywoman but this Lady *rides on the Beast,* bearing no burden herself but herself a burden to others. Everywoman was driven by circumstances into a wilderness of poverty. This Lady lives in *a wilderness* of wealth, of desolated hopes, withered innocence, remorseful memory and barren ambition. It is only under compulsion that John will look upon her. The angel, in talking things over, has

to persuade him that it is his apostolic duty. He has to be commanded, *Come up hither.* He has to be *carried away,* despite himself, by *the Spirit of Truth.* An angel's warning, as of a trumpet, is not enough for the world. The last final note of impending peril must be sounded by one who is *a brother and companion in tribulation.*

The Lady of Fashion is so richly arrayed and with such a queenly taste that on seeing her, even John *wondered with great admiration.* Her costume was of *purple and scarlet colour* and she was *decked with gold and precious stones.* But the aim of these things was to attract notice to herself. And whereas Everywoman had a face that welcomed the sun, we do not read of a sun shining on Babylon, but only of *candles,* an artificial illumination, night turned into day and day turned into night. Doubtless it is from *a golden cup* that with unsteady hand the Lady of Fashion drinks the wine of life. But the actual draught is described as *abominations and filthiness of her fornications.* At heart of her, this Lady of Fashion is *a harlot,* nay more, *the mother of harlots,* of girls drawn into her pitiless net of social intrigue, married at her whim for money or notoriety; she is *mother of abominations,* of drugs and drink and witchcraft, of spiritualism and decadence and dice and all manner of gambling with human destiny.

Her Luxuries.

Vast, varied and far in its reach is the influence wielded by the Lady of Fashion. She simply is *Babylon the Great.* Let her leave on her yacht, and *everybody* is out of town. The place is "empty," except for the rest of us. She *sits upon many waters.* For

her, India sends silks, and Africa ivory, and Australia feathers. At her court, kings *commit fornication*—kings of all kinds. Journalists, for her sake, suppress the truth. Artists, for her sake, paint the rich and ignore the poor. Financiers, for her sake, deal dubiously in stocks and shares. Politicians, for her sake, buy and sell tainted titles. About it there is, of course, a certain glamour. On the pavement before her mansion stand unconsidered *the inhabitants of the earth, drunk with the wine of her fornication,* but only drunk, not dead, and what about the inhabitants of the earth when they wake from the spell, disillusioned and with head and heart aching?

Her Contempt for Religion.

Of religion, the Lady of Fashion is contemptuous. She attends the opera and there hears *the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and of trumpeters,* but that is her only approach to reverence. To her, life is still the amphitheatre, where the Lady of Fashion sits prominent, claiming all and sacrificing nothing, while below her, in an arena which she would disdain to enter, these *saints,* these *martyrs of Jesus,* these narrow-minded impossible evangelicals spend their energies, shed their *blood,* their only use being to furnish a sensation for the upper classes, to *intoxicate* society. Borne by the Beast, with *its seven heads and ten horns all full of names of blasphemy,* the Lady of Fashion sneers at every sacrifice endured by the faithful disciples of Him Who, to save Mary Magdalene from seven devils, died on the Cross.

In her glittering wretchedness, she is *a mystery.* And the angel unfolded it. It is a mystery of power and opportunity abused. The *Beast* or Living Crea-

ture is, as in chapter thirteen, our ever-changing but essentially changeless industrial system. *It was, it was not, and then, again, it is.* Commerce, as of Rome, vanishes; commerce, as of Venice, develops; people whose names are not in the book of life, look on bewildered and can find no clue to these fluctuating tides. They argue without reference to the heart—*that bottomless pit* whence arises, as Our Lord knew, every selfish purpose, which purpose spends itself in *perdition,* or mere nothing. There you have, in a word, the secret of the rise and fall of empires and nations.

Herein, says the angel, *is the mind that has wisdom* —not to think, as we often do, that a mere change in the form of Babylon, in her system of government or of economics, will bring in the New Jerusalem, but to watch those changes calmly, to record them as John does with a cool lucidity, knowing that Babylon is still Babylon, until Christ comes to reign. *On seven hills,* as of Rome, the Lady of Fashion ever has her dwelling, enjoying every privilege, every security, every honour, essentially the same *grande dame sans mercie,* under the *ancient régime* of the Empire. Dynasties of *seven kings,*—once more the perfect or destined number—are approaching an end,—*five have lived and died, a sixth reigns, and only a seventh is to come.* Slowly but surely, the hereditary principle is passing into republicanism. *As eighth monarch we have for a while the Beast or Living Creature,* the community organized on a constitutional basis, and then the ten horns push in, emblem of secular yet civil force, mighty combinations of labour and capital, which seize and exercise governing power again for a while. These industrial organisms achieve a certain purpose

in line with the will of God. Believing in efficiency, they *hate* the Lady of Fashion and her extravagances; insisting on a stern discipline, like Prohibition, they *make her desolate;* from time to time, they *leave her naked* or bankrupt; they *eat her flesh,* foreclose her mortgages and dispose of her effects; they *burn her with fire*—her châteaus and pavilions. When humanity discovers that it cannot afford the Lady of Fashion, perforce she disappears.

But these movements of revolution, though preparatory to the Great Event, are not, as such, of Christ. Capital and Labour may dispose of ancient institutions, but their motive is still selfishness; their aim is not yet self-sacrifice; their mentality is, as Sir Philip Gibbs expresses it, that of robber barons—*they make war on the Lamb.* What the world needs is still the larger love that includes the world; and that love prevails—*the Lamb shall overcome them.* Because love is the strongest thing in the world and He loved to the uttermost, therefore is He inevitably *King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*

The Angel of Selfishness.

Having dealt with armies and thrones and society and commerce, John now foresees a new factor in our affairs—*an angel coming down from heaven, having great power, so that the earth was lightened with his glory.* His only weapon was what he said—*he cried mightily with a strong voice*—and what he cried was a piece of news—*Babylon the great is fallen.* Here in the Apocalypse, you have, perhaps, the first unmistakable headline for a morning paper. It is brief, clear, challenging—a perfect piece of modern journalism. Organized by the printing press, you have as a

force for the first time that conscience which lighteneth every man who comes into the world—not peculiarly an ecclesiastical or Christian conscience but the general judgment of mankind,—what is called public opinion, —expressed in a thousand ways, by political parties, philanthropic societies, municipal councils and all the varied propaganda of modern life. There is at last a world-wide sentiment—nothing more as yet—on the side of Christ and against Babylon.

The Fall of Babylon.

What guides this sentiment is the exposure of Babylon's abuses. In her corruption, as here described, we find once more the trinity of evil,—she is *the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.* In Babylon, evil dwells, evil defends itself and evil is encaged. You have *the devils* in possession; you have, as in *the world,* foul spirits in action; and the result is *the flesh,*—every unclean and hateful bird. A feature of Babylon's decadence is the profiteering. *Through the abundance of her delicacies, merchants are waxed rich.* As Babylon falls, these merchants, rendering her no help, *stand afar, weeping and wailing,*—not with the sorrow of Christ Who wept over Jerusalem, but only lamenting that *their own riches had come to naught.* Similarly, the shipowners, whose business depended on Babylon's *costliness,* lament at finding her *desolate.* In this picture, there are lines that seem to be written expressly for Europe to-day and for any civilization that makes Europe's mistakes. Music declines—*the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and of trumpeters shall be heard no more in thee.* Industry is paralyzed—*no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall*

be found any more in thee. Food is no longer produced—*the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee.* Illumination is dimmed—*the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee,* and home is shattered—there are *neither brides nor bridegrooms.* The marriage tie is no longer sacred. And the reason is that *merchants are the great men;* success is the supreme aim in life, while *prophets and saints*—they who see and they who serve—*are slain upon earth;* neglected, put on one side.

All this you will find in the newspapers,—it is written on the face of Austria and Russia—it is Moscow and Vienna and Petrograd visualized—but it is not the whole story. Within Babylon, there is a company, described as *called and chosen and faithful,* who belong to the Lamb. It is the Church, as Crusader, rallied around the Captain of Salvation. These soldiers of the Cross are free—called, not compelled. They are chosen, each for his post. They are faithful to their oath. For them, the voice of public opinion, even where it is justified, is not enough. They hear *another voice from heaven,* personal to each as to John, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues.* There is to be a definite distinction drawn between the customs and aims of those who take upon them the name of Christ and others who do not. It may be in the form of an avoidance of pleasures which are open to the multitude, like the dance, drink and the drama. It may mean the performance of tasks which are evaded by the multitude, like missionary and social duties. It is a deeper difference than any detail, like card-playing or racing. It involves direction—the point of the compass to which the face is turned.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CHRIST ON CRUSADE

AND after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

For true and righteous *are* his judgments.

* * * * * * *

And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped.

* * * * * * *

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

* * * * * * *

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself.

And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains.

* * * * * * *

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

—REVELATION 19.

XXIV

THE CHRIST ON CRUSADE

THERE are those who think that if we are called upon to leave the delights of Babylon, nothing remains for us but a dull and cheerless piety. That was not what John saw in his Vision. As Babylon fell in ruins, as the saloons were closed and the haunts of vice, so did happiness increase, *much people* being found *in heaven,* the region of bliss, here and hereafter. They were people whose voice was praise, *a great voice, saying Alleluia,* and ascribing to *our God* their personal heritage, the *glory and honour and power,* which follow, not conquest and luxury, but *salvation.* They held that God's estimate of fashionable society was *true and righteous,* and that in the destruction of a corrupt society itself lay the legitimate *avenging of the blood of His servants.* As ancient wrongs were thus swept away, they again said *Alleluia,* and they watched, as historians study, *the smoke,* or memory, *of Babylon rising up, for ever and ever,* not to be forgotten while language is spoken. In the midst of that growing company of the redeemed, still sat *the four and twenty elders,* surviving all the criticism and neglect of Scripture, and now sharing the praise of the multitudes who came later—*Amen: Alleluia.* The elders *fell down and worshipped,* their work done, and their authority as prophets, priests and patriarchs finally merged in the Christ Who is all in

all, and of those four and twenty on their thrones, this is, I think, the final leave-taking. In the City of God, there is to be no aristocracy, even of learning and of piety, but Christ is to be the centre of adoration.

Then was heard once more *a voice from the throne,* always, I think, the voice of Christ Himself, commanding *praise,* as the very breath of *His servants, both small and great,* and of *all who fear Him.* Vengeance was righteous, but praise is joyful, *a gladness, as of the marriage feast;* and the voice of Our Lord, previously likened unto the voice of many waters, is now at last echoed as *a voice of many waters,* not less tender, not less strong, by *the mighty thunders* of a redeemed democracy. At the moment, these disciples, though now numerous and powerful, were only a part of the human race, *a bride made ready for the wedding,* that perfect union of God's will in heaven, done by us upon earth. To the Church, so emergent from obscurity, *was granted fine linen raiment, clean and white, that is the righteousness of saints,*—a grant or gift, not inherited or acquired, but won by Another for the Church—a raiment unspotted by blood, as of a vesture to be mentioned in a moment—meaning in that respect that the righteousness of saints is for them alone; that if others want it, they must come, as the saints came, not to the Church, but to the Christ Himself.

In the presence of the Church, John suddenly found that he had company in heaven. At his elbow there was an unknown friend. It was a church where a stranger from another world was made immediately welcome. *"Surely,"* said this disciple to John, *"you will write in your book how happy they are who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is not a vision only but the true sayings of God."* And John,

looking on this transfigured doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, forgot his apostleship and fell at his feet to worship. *Do it not,* said the unknown disciple, adding that what had thus ennobled him was simply *the testimony of Jesus*—which, he said, is *the spirit—the essence—of foresight.* Know Him and you can read the future.

And then it was that John saw once more *heaven opened, and, behold a white horse.* In this war, now to be declared against evil, there is to be no red horse of slaughter, no black horse of famine, no pale horse of disease and of death. The horse represents a pure and disinterested purpose, conquering the base things in human affairs. *Only in righteousness does the Christ judge and make war.* He is *Faithful* to comrades and *True* to facts.

When John of Patmos first saw the Christ in glory, it was as a personal friend standing amid the candlesticks—that is, the Churches. Having so realized the Saviour, he now sees Him a second time, in His second coming, as the Christ on Crusade, winning His way to a supreme earthly influence. His weapons are two—*the eye of fire* that exposes and consumes the wrong, and *the sword of the mouth* that smites the evil-doer. Yet majestic as is His appearance, *He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood;* His heart still bled for our sin and sorrow, nor were His wounds yet healed.

Men realized His power at last—*on His vesture and on His thigh,*—on His righteousness and in His person,—they could see plainly that He was now *King of Kings and Lord of Lords.* On His head were *many crowns,*—crowned was He by art and literature and social service and even by commerce and politics. But there was *a name that He only knew Himself.* There

was a Love that He only could fathom. All that men could say of this name was that, however it found utterance, it was, as John of Patmos wrote in his gospel, *the Word of God.* He it is—the returning Christ—who *treadeth out the winepress of the wrath of God*—in whose labour the good in society is painfully wrung from the bad.

There are *armies in heaven,* mounted as He on white horses, and clad as He in white raiment,—though without His Field Marshal's stripes of red and redeeming blood,—who follow Him to earth—who leave riches and success for service and sacrifice—who are proud to fight in a company where only the Captain was eternally wounded. Here then was to be the Church Militant—radiant in the crusade of the personal Christ—and going forth with Him to win the nations and to change churches into cities of God.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MILLENNIUM AND THE THRONE

AND I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him.

* * * * * * *

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, * * * and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

* * * * * * *

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.

And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are,* and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

—REVELATION 20.

XXV

THE MILLENNIUM AND THE THRONE

SO many have been mystified by the millennium that I am surprised to find it so simple. It is a period that follows the fall of Babylon, and Babylon means any society of nations that resembles—to give two instances, the Roman Empire in decay or Europe before the Great War. Ten is the secular number, and this period, being one thousand years, or ten multiplied by ten and again by ten, expresses what we sometimes call an era of political and social reform, real while it lasts, permanent in its effects, but subject to a later reaction, when the Devil again escapes. It is not that there is as yet a Democracy which freely welcomes the Christ. He still *rules with a rod of iron.* It is under compulsion only that the majority accept the example of His followers and give up evils like slavery and liquor and vices. In numerous movements, battling against wrong with a disinterested zeal, we see Christ on His White Horse, with His Crusaders around Him. Here is the Redeemer, leading His Church into regions of philanthropy and administration. It is the ideal of Theocracy, often attempted locally, as by Cromwell, but becoming world-wide in application.

The Shadow of Selfishness.

Not less plain to the sight is *the angel standing in the sun*—who throws over the nations, therefore, so

dark a shadow,—the angel of selfishness, of vested interests, who desires his own happiness at others' expense. He addresses himself to *the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven,* the carrion crows of civilization, who, as Our Lord foresaw, would gather even in the boughs of that mustard tree which was to him a symbol of the Kingdom of God. The smart set, the men about town, the racing fraternity,—these are the birds that form the selfish angel's congregation, and bitterly defiant is his discourse. *Marriage supper of the Lamb!*—he cries—*Come and gather yourselves together and I will show you what is meant by the supper of the Great God!* It is the rally of reactionaries who fear the new day that is dawning. To the selfish angel, the light means ruin. *The flesh* and all that panders to it, must disappear as if *eaten. Kings* will lose their luxuries; *captains,* their privilege; hunting men, their *horses;* indeed, all classes, *bond and free, small and great,* widow and orphan, will feel the change and resent it. Naturally, the selfishness in mankind makes common cause—*kings and the beast,* meaning organized society, *and their armies,* meaning the people, *gather together* against the Christ, Who wins, however, a bloodless victory with *the sword of His mouth*—the force of argument, as at an election. *The Beast*—that is, organized society—*is taken, and the false prophet also*—signifying, *with its miracles,* the literature of Pagan sensation; *and these are cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone*—are clean obliterated by the force of public disapproval. Condemned by the Christ, the remnants of evil are driven underground. But there are still *fowls of the air* ready to batten on *the flesh*—that lies as carrion amid the momentary confusion.

The Reign of Law.

After this triumph of right over wrong, the angel no longer stands in the sun, but is seen once more on his belly, *just that same old serpent which is the Devil and Satan*—the third element in the triumvirate of evil, powerful when the Christ is unrealized, but impotent when the Christ is again amongst us. For there emerges from God's presence a new angel, one determined that God's will be done on earth as in heaven, *an angel of restraining law, bearing a great chain,*—accurate picture of criminal jurisprudence as ordained in a modern state. He *lays hold of the dragon and binds him a thousand years,* so imprisoning him in *the bottomless pit* of human passion. There you have prohibition—the gospel as deterrent—factory regulations,—good housing—a capable force of detectives — an admirable and effective system of prisons.

At first John had seen the martyrs as souls, huddled around the altar in heaven and calling for revenge. Then he had watched them at rest, and so recovering from their affliction. Later, he had heard them praise the Almighty Father and now he sees them *living and reigning with Christ.* There were *thrones* in the world and these were *the men who sat on them and gave judgment.* As the presence of Christ is manifested among the nations, so does He bring with Him those who have been His witnesses. Their words carry weight. Their example is followed. It is a characteristic of the millennium that the best in Christian thought is revived, not precisely as it used to be, but as Christ rose from the dead,—glorified, with ampler, fuller meaning. *Happy indeed and holy are those who have their part in that first resurrection; on*

them, the second death—the final oblivion—*has no power.* Their prestige, their influence is forever secure.

Gog and Magog.

But it is not enough that the world should be ruled by Christians, according to Christ's plan. There can be no permanent peace until the world, meaning individuals all over the world, *are* Christians, and as long as the Devil is only chained in the bottomless pit of our depravity, we may be sure that *he will be loosed one day from his prison* and that the eternal war between good and evil will be waked anew. It is universal not racial war, covering *the four quarters of the earth,* a war involving multitudes *as the sand of the sea,* all the old incoherent barbarisms and prejudices of *Magog with Gog, their king, gathered by deceit to battle*—anything to *compass* or besiege *the camp of the saints and the city they are building.* This is John's first fleeting glimpse of the New Jerusalem,—he sees the Church, defending the good that is attained and constructing the better. And it is his last sight of the Church. Henceforth, there rises before him the majestic conception of a society that shall include all of us. The witnessing Church was to him only the seed of the perfect State. Gog and Magog—you ask—what were they? Your question is the answer. The whole point of those ancient battle-cries is that they had wholly lost their meaning.

Many years before—to repeat a historical parallel—John had been among those who would have called down fire from heaven on an unbelieving Samaritan village. It was Elijah's remedy for the unregenerate. The punishment which Christ inflicted was just His

absence,—He walked away—withdrew Himself as His disciples withdrew themselves from Babylon, ere it fell—but here was a new situation—not Samaria rejecting Christ for Samaria, but Samaria trying to destroy Christ in Jerusalem. And, therefore, *fire did now come down from the God of Heaven to destroy or devour* those armies, who, thus deceived, would have attacked the realized achievements in Society of the Redeemer. *The Devil* is now sent no longer to the bottomless pit of human passion from which he had just escaped; that was only his Elba. For the Devil, as for the Beast and the False Prophet, the final doom —the St. Helena—was *a lake of fire and brimstone,* the Vesuvius of the Apocalypse, which consumes without possibility of restoration. The wrath of God against wrong and the wrath of man against wrong are together enough to drive wrong into the abyss.

The Great White Throne.

When John first saw the Throne of God, it was as a sunrise, flecked with crimson, as of a sardius, and in the midst was the Lamb, as it had been slain, showing us clearly that God is Love. He now sees this same Throne, not as an Altar of Atonement, but *great and white,*—the judgment seat of Him Who, while He is Love, must be therefore also Truth and also Righteousness. It is not a new or different Throne, but the same, only men have become, as it were, colour blind, unable to see in the heavens the Friend Who died for them. Having refused the Christ of Calvary, they now would flee from the Lord of Sinai, so declining repentance. But there is that in Conscience which cannot be crushed. Sooner or later, whether we wish it or not, we are brought face to face with our *works.*

No longer does John see the Four Beasts. In the ultimate reckoning, even Science is superseded and men must deal direct with *Him Who sits on the Throne*—with God Himself. There are no Four and Twenty Elders to act as mediators. The intercession of saints, even of the Virgin Mary, whom John had tended, is set aside. *Earth and heaven flee away*—our environment is no plea, be it happy or the reverse; it is what we are and what we have done that alone matter. For circumstances and excuses, *there is no place found. Small and great, the dead stand before God*—the rich cannot plead their wealth and the poor cannot plead their poverty. All of us have come short of the glory of God and there is no difference. *Even the sea gave up her dead*—not only those who physically were drowned therein, for the sea was to John a symbol of the undiscovered and restless heathendom beyond his reach. For all of us, in whatever continent and climate we beat out our little lives, there is one destiny, which destiny is God. *Death*—meaning the grave—yielded a tribute of souls, and you did not escape by denying immortality. So did *Hell or Hades* send contingents—whatever might be imagined of Nirvana or Purgatory or any other intermediate state of the departed had to *give up* in the end to God.

There, before His Great White Throne, thus stand the ranks of mankind,—the proudest monarch and the humblest slave—the most learned of philosophers and the aboriginal Patagonian who can scarce utter a sentence—the clear-headed statesman of politics and commerce, and the poor lunatic who sees all things in a broken glass,—young and old—the veteran of a hundred battles and the babe at the breast. It is no longer a matter of systems or wars or revolutions. All these

things are over. And there remains what we least like to acknowledge—our personal responsibility.

The Books Opened.

The books were opened—many books—great works of literature and music and science and art—whatever man has dreamed and argued and discovered, but these, one by one, were laid aside, and *another book was opened, the book of life.* As Jesus came to give us *life* more abundantly, so was *life* made the test of living—what joy we have in life, what love, what peace, what goodness. In that book are names written in the alphabet of deeds. We show our faith by our works. And so are we judged. Have we visited the sick, fed the hungry, clothed the naked? *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me*—and you are *found in the book of life.* No patience equals this search of God for one action that would link us with His kindly purpose. And if there be no such record, what wonder if the soul is *cast into the lake of fire?* Even the worst of us is noble enough for remorse.

So culminates whatever men have meant by *death and hell.* They also are cast into *the lake of fire.* With the fierce burning up of sin and waste, as of rubbish, goes that sense of punishment, which is part of our wicked failure. As the body first died and was dissolved, so is there *a second death,* of evil and all that evil means. And Christ thus becomes, not merely a commanding political influence, as Faithful and True, riding the white horse and ruling with a rod of iron, but All in All, the only influence left in the world, whether here or in the illimitable hereafter.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TURN OF THE ROAD

I LOOKED, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

The four living creatures . . . had the likeness of a man . . . (with) four wings, and their feet were straight feet . . . (which) sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

Their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps . . . and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host; when they stood, they let down their wings.

Their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

Whither the spirit was to go, they went.

—From EZEKIEL. Chap. I.

XXVI

THE TURN OF THE ROAD

WE have now climbed, with difficulty and labour hard, to the shoulder of that great mountain of human sin and folly which has hidden from our eyes as yet the glorious skylines of the City of God. And ere we turn the corner of our upward road, I invite you to rest a while and consider what already in our journey together we have achieved. Our company included at the outset a journalist of brilliant attainments, who would not read the Revelation of St. John the Divine and hinted that those who do read it might spend their time more wisely. If he be still amongst us pilgrims, I would ask him whether, in vision, there really is a waste of energy. Is it not better, after all, to see clearly where you are going? How could one have spent one's leisure to better advantage than by this enjoyment of the Apocalypse? One has now, what one lacked before, a clue to the riddles of history—a philosophy of events, otherwise perplexing and distressful.

If one had only found in the Apocalypse a forecast, here and there, of the life we are now living, there would have been, perhaps, no sense of wonder, but the picture is complete. Even the details are filled in. And therefore I, for one, arrive at the fact of prophecy, of a God Who foresees and Who, thus foreseeing,

shares with us, when we reverence Him, His intimate counsels. From this I conclude that, at a given moment, He is not far from any one of us, that He knows and cares and helps.

You ask me to explain how it was that a man, calling himself John, came to put these things down on paper. I can imagine some scholar, well versed in the affairs of the Roman Empire, taking the Vision and showing how every symbol applied to events in John's own day. Let it be so—what then? Is it any the less marvellous that a Vision, transient in origin, should be eternal in its truth? Our Lord made clay and anointed a man's eyes who then was able to see the life he was living. Did the use of common clay destroy the miracle? John also was of that same common clay, but Our Lord took him and used him as sight to us who had been blind. Really, it does not matter very much to me whether you call it genius or inspiration, for why should genius be neglected, merely because some millions of people, as sane as their critics, have found it also "inspired"?

Ezekiel—the Pioneer.

In whatever we mean by prophecy, as an art or as a science or as a mystery, John of Patmos had been obviously a lifelong student, and of Ezekiel especially was he a disciple. Ezekiel was the Jules Verne of the Old Testament, with a deeper purpose within him than mere entertainment, and it is in his first chapter, written by the River Chebar, hundreds of years before Christ, that you find, in actual and demonstrable fact, the earliest description of an aeroplane. The only machinery that he had seen was of the simplest—a water-wheel, a chariot-wheel, a potter's-wheel, a mill-

stone, and a pulley with ropes for lifting and hauling weights. Yet arguing from these elementary beginnings, he arrived at the conclusion that in the centuries to come the active and subtle brain of man would evolve therefrom an infinitely complicated machinery, of wheels within wheels, and that an inevitable outcome of such progress would be a successful flight through the air, as a chariot speeds along the road,—a flight in which the generating power would be flame, flashing and sparking like lightning, but the guidance of which would continue to be the face of a man within the wheels, and the spirit of man ever determining the aeroplane's direction. Read it for yourself and you will find that indisputably it is so.

Evolution of War.

Here then was a Hebrew prophet who by "looking" into life could discern two features of our modern civilization, namely, an inconceivably wonderful development of mechanical ingenuity and, with it, the continued supremacy over all mechanism of the human will; so that you have on the one hand the aeroplane, designed according to immutable laws of science, and on the other hand the airman, in his daredevilry, looping the loop. All that, I say, you will find in the first chapter of the neglected prophet Ezekiel.

We who take short views of life may despise these far imaginings. But not so John of Patmos. To him, the future of mankind presented a fascinating and often a terrible vista. As Ezekiel argued from the potter's wheel to the aeroplane, so John argued from the wars that he knew of to the wars that certainly must be. Seeing the eruption of a volcano, he reasoned with a logic which time has justified that man

would take those same sulphurous elements, would enclose them in metal as volcanoes are restrained by the rocks, and would use the explosion thereof as a weapon, as the explosion of Vesuvius was used by Destiny to overwhelm Pompeii. From that, he arrived inevitably at trench warfare, where armies would dig themselves into the ground to escape from injury, at bursting shells, falling like stars, and by inference at the entire panorama of modern battles.

One example of his insight may be recalled—I refer to the third horse of the Apocalypse. I can understand a man writing of war as a succession of trampling horses. I see the sword as a weapon and the bow and arrows and the subsequent disease and death, which came with the fourth horse. But the third horse, where the rider carried, of all things, a pair of scales, is incredible, either in the madness of the idea or in the supreme wisdom of it. What are you to say of a poet and visionary who had what we call the wit to perceive that world-wide conflict between peoples would mean the rationing of food?

The Great Consummation.

I need not recapitulate the many other precise and exquisitely indicated descriptions of modern life of which, in the preceding pages, I have pointed out the accuracy. For I wish to proceed at once to the further question why, if these things are really so, such genius as John's should have been harnessed to a task, so fantastic as composing this epic upon a history that was still to come. Were there no flowers at his feet, no birds at the window of his cell, no children playing by the path which he trod, that he must needs indulge his poetic muse in a kind of bewildering legerdemain, in-

sane if meaningless and only curious if correct? Assume that all I say is right, then, asks my critical friend, *cui bono?* Who is the better or happier or wiser for all this abstruse imagery? The answer is that John was out to prove a certain stupendous proposition. In defense and assertion of that proposition, he was bound by the necessities of the case to call history as a witness,—history not past alone, but the history that was to be. He was compelled, therefore, to elaborate that history in terms which, however puzzling for the moment, would be in the times to come self-evidently true. Assume then that the proposition to be demonstrated was worth while, it follows that the method, even if strange, was justified, if, that is, it proved to be effective. Everything of this argument depends, then, on the proposition. What was it?

The Coming of Christ.

The thesis was this—that at some moment in the future annals of our race, the Christ of Calvary would return—in quick sudden majesty—to reign over men and women. Over and over again, this idea—*Behold, I come quickly*—is repeated and, whatever we may think of it, we cannot ignore for one moment its importance, whether as reasonable faith or as mystical delusion. The mere difference that Christ has made to our world by coming amongst us for the first time, would be proof sufficient of what difference He would make if He were to return. If we could imagine what this world, as it now is, would be like on any single day that all men allowed Our Lord to rule their wills, then, we might go on to work out the results of His rule over the hearts of men if continued for a year, ten years, a thousand years. Abuses would be swept away. Edu-

cation in Christ would eliminate hatreds and prejudices and vices. Nations would play together, converted as little children, and bloodshed would be unthinkable.

John held that there could be no such new Jerusalem except as the Bride of Christ. Only by worshipping the Lamb on the mount may society be thus regenerated on the basis of happiness. John shows that war and revolution and commerce and all the resources of science and statesmanship fail utterly to bring security to men's wealth and peace to men's souls. Where there is the mark of the beast instead of the mark of the Lamb, society must be ever in peril. We are told how, without Christ, dynasties and republics and military despotisms and industrial corporations successively collapse by their own weight, each involving in its downfall a more terrible disaster to mankind than the one that went before. Great movements, like that for the emancipation of motherhood, culminate in a straight battle between those who are for and those who are against Christ. Like the Olive Trees, Churches fall and lie dormant, except as they rise with Christ from the dead. And from this reasoning, we are led to the conclusion, not only that Christ may come again amongst us, but that, if our homes and our happiness are to be preserved against the hideous resources of devilry, if we are to defy chemistry and pathology, consecrated to hatred, if poison and disease germs are to be suppressed instead of being propagated, if governments are to be the enemy instead of the arch-perpetrators of crime, then, *Christ must come.* Between Him Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life—between Him and universal, organized death, there is no longer a middle ground. We must have either the devil's reign of murder or Christ's millennium.

A Stupendous Proposition.

This was the stupendous proposition which John of Patmos set out to prove. Realizing as he did—and as we are beginning to realize—that the very continuance of the human race depends on disarming the forces of evil and enthroning the Author of Good, he wrote with a certain apparent intolerance of those who would add unto his sayings their own ideas or, according to their own whims, detract from those sayings. This was no egotism of the literary artist, no dictation of the theological scribe. It was the quick command of a man who detects the spark and dreads the prairie fire. There is not a Congress, a Cabinet, an Embassy, a Parliament, not a department of state, where John's vision would not be a safeguard against the overshadowing peril of a future, unguided by the Christ.

John was one who had himself seen the Christ come a first time. In his Gospel, he tells how this Man, apparently so humble in His origin and so simple in His habits and message, was gradually revealed as divine, not all at once, but by numberless hints—the way He talked to people quite as much as the way He healed them—until it was impossible for a doubter like Thomas or the discouraged disciples fishing fruitlessly in the cold gray dawn to see this Christ without knowing Him to be Lord and God. This later Vision of John's reveals to us similarly, stage by stage, the revelation of the Christ in the faces of our fellow-men. It might seem as if His glorious lineaments were fading from the horizon of the Churches, leaving on all the world the mark of the beast. But if you seek out where people are happy, there you find the mark of the Christ, stamped on human countenances ever more plainly, until, as leaven, the kingdom or rule of happi-

ness permeates the entire body politic, and there descends on our institutions, so perfected, the glory of the City of God.

Daniel's Image.

John was a prophet, the last of an illustrious line of prophets. He had read of Daniel's image, with the head of gold, representing Babylon, and the arms of silver, that is Persia, and the thighs of brass, meaning Greece, and the legs of iron, which was Rome,—standing on feet of iron and clay, a picture of the mingled strength and weakness of states since the Roman Empire fell. He therefore expected that one day there would descend on our later civilization what Daniel called the stone, cut out without hands, which would break all the metals of all the kingdoms into one chaos in order that out of the chaos might arise a kingdom that should never be moved. On this theme, so clearly stated to Nebuchadnezzar, John developed his more elaborate conception. What Daniel had seen dimly as a stone, unhewn because rejected of the builders,—the stone that would not fit any of our selfish edifices—this, John found to be the Christ, returning as King with His retinue, to reign over heaven and earth.

He realized—as we have seen in our interpretation—that the coming of the Saviour would be prepared by a world-wide distribution of the Scriptures, by missionaries flying like angels to the ends of the earth, by a revival of the Churches that would astonish and alarm the spectators thereof, by an emergence of political power in the East, and by a gradual building, at first most imperfect, of the City of God upon earth. John also saw that for a period the returning Christ would be expressed in terms of power, that many

would be forced to do His will, not physically but by His public opinion,—the word of His mouth. He also perceived that after the period was over, this discipline would break down, until men's hearts were won for Christ, until they should do His will, not because they have to do it, but because they like it. And thus John arrives at his grand conclusion, which is that no society can be perfectly contented, whether in heaven or on earth, unless every one within it is wholly devoted to the Person and obedience of the Lamb of God.

The Triumph of the Good.

At this final result, he arrives by tracing the gradual progress of the good in Christ and His disciples. But with the progress of good, he recognizes that there is also a progress of evil, and this also he describes. At first, it seems as if evil were stronger than any other force acting upon the affairs of men. The devil escapes from hell and there is no power on earth to put him back again. But it is to be noted that evil, in the very heydey of its triumph, only ruined one-third of society,—its victory was partial—whereas the good in Christ is to be ultimately universal. There were always people who refused to surrender to evil. The time will come when every knee will bow to Our Lord of Good. Evil was thus never so strong as He ever has been, and in the darkest days we have in Him the biggest battalions on our side. The defeat of evil is seen in the martyrdom of those who resisted unto death, in the song which succeeded to their complaints and in the enrollment of the redeemed for worship and service. Generations arise which are strong enough to suppress the evil, and the devil is put back into hell. Where the multitude had loved the evil and only the

individual had loved the good, it began to be the other way. It was the multitude that thronged the streets of the City of God and it was the individual who loved his lies and his indulgences and was thus self-excluded from happiness.

* * * * * * *

Look back over the long valley that we have together traversed and you will see that this is, broadly, the progress that we have made. We now stand, as I have said, on the shoulder of the Hill Difficulty. A step or two onwards, and we shall see before us, no longer the perplexities of the past, but the noble outlines of the New Jerusalem, the holy city of God. As seven days were needed to complete the old creation, with the soul of man within it, so seven seals, seven trumpets and seven vials, working together through evil for good, changed creation into a new heaven and a new earth.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE NEW JERUSALEM

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.

And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

—REVELATION 21: 1–8.

XXVII

THE NEW JERUSALEM

IT is not by fine writing that any one can embellish the utter truth and beauty of God's perfect city. As a boy, in the long ago, John had kept the feasts at Jerusalem and with other pilgrims had sung the songs of Zion, which are still among our Psalms, so extolling her gates and walls, her bulwarks and her palaces. As kinsman of the High Priest, he was the apostle most familiar with the Temple, and if we read the Fourth Gospel, we find that what gripped John's memory was not so much the Christ of Galilee, of humdrum daily life, as the Christ of Zion, the divine Statesman, the Royal Christ, born to be King. With Jerusalem swept away by the Romans and with the immemorial Passover interrupted except upon the heretical Gerizim where it was an insult, all the landmarks of John's eager patriotism had vanished and he had to face the disillusionment that to-day has overtaken millions of loyal folk, the wide world over. What the German feels over the ruin of the Fatherland, the bitterness of Vienna at finding herself a head without a body, the uneasiness of the American who discovers that even his country is trodden under foot by immigrants who know little of the great traditions, the humbling of Britain over an Empire slowly changing into an alliance, the end of all things hitherto recognized as authoritative in Russia,—all this illustrates John's sorrow over the old Jerusalem that had meant for him so much. And for us to-day, the value of his experience

lies just in this—that when the established order of society was broken up and institutions reduced to chaos, he was not left comfortless. In Christ, he found more than Jerusalem had ever been to him. To be a Jew or a German or an Englishman or an American or a Russian might involve him in disappointment and anxiety, but to be Christ's man meant hope and vision—the vision of a new and better society, arising from the eternal foundations of love and justice, around the Person of *God and the Lamb.*

Doubtless the Jerusalem of the Herods and of Pontius Pilate, like our cities, fell far below a civic ideal. But John was a man, converted—born again, as he put it, like a little child,—and to him, as to a child playing on the floor with bricks, there was on Mount Zion infinitely more than mere stones and mortar. As the child with his toys dreams of railroads and seaports and castles, so John thought of the Christ-City where all should be holy, happy and healthy. Take away the bricks—let the child lie ill in his cot—and from the flickering shadows of the fire on his counterpane, he will still build palaces of wealth and glory. For the aged John of Patmos it was very near bedtime, but ere he drew the blanket around him and went to sleep, he also, like a little child, forgot the pain, the loneliness, the defeat, and had his fancy of the good that was to be.

Heaven and Earth.

It is always when the old is destroyed that God's poets foresee the new. Isaiah was one who watched the ruin of his Jerusalem and so talked, centuries before John, of *a new heaven and a new earth.* The former things, which had meant so much to him, would not

be remembered, said he, nor come to mind. *The first heaven and the first earth,* echoes John, *have passed away*—clean out of sight. In God, these men could face change. If Jerusalem became for them *a holy city,* it was because it was a city, constantly burnt and constantly built. Old dwellings are picturesque in decay, but they harbour disease. Cathedral towns are notoriously corrupt. I hope I have a loyal adherence to the British Empire to which I belong, but greater than any Empire, any Republic, is the universal rule of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Monarchies and commerce and citizenship and leagues have a value while they last but no dead hand, whether of law or art or politics or science or custom, can hold back the Christ. As He advances, all that is not precisely of Him must recede. Terrible is the destruction of old Jerusalem—a horror indeed to be dreaded. But He Who died to save Jerusalem would not have restored it. It was not He Who inspired the Crusades of the Middle Ages. What He said was—*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*

Every day of his life, John had prayed that the will of Our Father be done on earth as it is done in heaven. In Christ, he saw life, not as a broken mirror, but whole—the here and now linked with the hereafter; ideal expressed in the actual; thought wedded to deed; happiness amid circumstances. At few points in the Vision can you say definitely whether life is present or future—before death or beyond it. All is equally eternal. And heaven is ever put first—the unseen before the seen—the spiritual before the material. Men had attempted happiness the other way—to build their Tower of Babel up to heaven, to found their fortunes on wealth and achievement. I write for the most of

us who in this sense have failed. Even we—the poor and the unknown—may dwell in the Holy City that is not reared upwards to God, but comes to us, down,—right down to our level,—down from God—with many mansions or tenements or cottages prepared, because Christ went there first,—mansions which include a place *for you.* So had John written in his Gospel. So was the Word fulfilled in his experience.

He that Overcometh.

So simple and so radiant are the city's outlines, so glorious her battlements and golden streets, that one asks why for many weary years the Vision Splendid is hidden from our eyes. The poet of the Apocalypse was William Blake who tells of the "mental strife" whereby alone we can comprehend God's perfect society. If John was able at last to see the city so clearly it was because there was nothing of human sin and guilt and pain that he had not faced and, in the Spirit by which he wrote, fathomed. Kept by the power of God, he had met dragons and false prophets and beasts and had emerged unscathed. *He that overcometh*—he could say—*shall inherit all things.* England has her garden cities. The zeal that built them was kindled in the slums. Not in the artist, as such, but in the helper lies to-day the hope of mankind, and the surest guide to health is the physician who has seen most disease. *The angel who said to John, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife, was by an astounding coincidence one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues.* Not in avoiding judgment has mankind ever attained unto well being, but in accepting judgment—in finding mercy with righteousness.

No Temple Therein.

At first, one can discover nothing new in the new Jerusalem. Walls and gates and gold and trees and rivers—you would see all these in ancient Babylon. Nothing is said of tram-cars and telephones and sky-scrapers and the latest improvements. What made the city "new" was evidently something other than these —something unseen—in the air—some spirit of neighbourhood that men breathed—a Presence—an organized and personal care by each for all—Fatherhood working through Brotherhood—the existing materials put at last to their appointed use. In order to meet with God, people needed no longer to go on special days to special places—Church or Synagogue—for, says John, *I saw no Temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.* At last, the day had dawned when neither in Jerusalem nor in Samaria would men worship the Father, but they would worship Him everywhere, in Spirit and in Truth. Barriers between sects and races were broken down, distinctions between Sabbath and week-day obliterated. In Christ Jesus, at last, all men at all times became one. And in the very decline of a Church like Laodicea, in the decay of ecclesiastical institutions and observances, there was found to be the promise of the wider, deeper devotion to the Christ that is yet to be. If sometimes one finds less of Christ in the pulpit, one finds more of Him, dimly seen it is true, in the movies.

But as races and religions intermingled, no one, however humble, was lost in the mass. To each it is said, *I will be his God and he shall be my son.* Of Christ Himself, as Son of God, no more particular and affectionate thing is uttered. There is indeed the God of history and evolution—*Alpha and Omega, the begin-*

ning and the end. There is indeed the river flowing abundantly for everybody. But the Omnipotent and Eternal tenderly stoops to His parched child, dips a cup that the child can hold into the infinite stream, and says, *I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely.* Organized strength cherishes isolated weakness and God, not the devil, takes the hindmost. An Imperial Parliament provides the old age pension, insures the sick, cherishes the feeble-minded, teaches the infant.

No Death and No Pain.

Not, however, in the statistical spirit. Here, in the new Jerusalem, is an efficiency illuminated by fellow feeling. Centuries ere this, Isaiah had said that if tears are to be wiped from our eyes, it must be God Who does it. To Him, even our sorrows are sacred and, in the exquisite simile of the East, He puts our tears into His bottle. In the new Jerusalem, there is the God of all comfort, Who Himself wept over the old Jerusalem and can wipe all tears, therefore, from our faces. The old sores, personal and national, will be healed. There shall be *no more death and pain.* Paul tells us that the last enemy to be overcome is death, and it is true. Only in the fully realized presence of Christ does death become resurrection, as at Nain and at Bethany where He raised the dead. The day is surely coming when tombs and graveyards and funereal monuments will be as obsolete as idols—when mourning garments will be an ill memory—when we shall enter into His glory with singing as did the early Christians. And so also with *pain.* As the use of torture is discredited, so is surgery relieved by anæsthetics. Disease is prevented where disease used to be

cured. *The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations*—a perfect picture of hospitals, founded by accrued wealth. Life is so lived as to bring health. Fresh air, reasonable hours of labour, minds immune from worry, games, amusements bring vigorous old age. As Isaiah prophesied, *there shall be no more an old man that hath not filled his days.* Christ's miracles of healing were pointers only. Against fevers and cancers and leprosy, there is now waged world-wide war.

As this vision broke upon John's gaze, he was silent with wonder. His pen lay idle in his hand. He could not believe his eyes. He did not dare to commit himself to ideals so daring. But God commanded, *Write.* Explain the thing—get the people to understand it—make it clear to them, this social and personal love of God. *For these words are faithful and true,* being none else than Christ Himself—*the Word of God, Faithful and True*—expressed in the language of daily goodness. *Behold,* said the Eternal, *it is I Who make all things new,* and without Him we can do nothing.

The Bride Adorned.

No mere municipal organism, this city was a romance—*adorned as a bride for her husband.* All the things that Christ was denied on earth, were there. For Him, homes were painted, flowers set in windows, gardens cultivated. As Zechariah had foretold boys and girls playing in the streets of the city, without peril to mind or body, so in parks and playgrounds would it be fulfilled. For the city of God, no ornament was too costly. Even the foundations, hidden underground, were *garnished with all manner of precious stones*—a reminiscence, by the way, of Tobit

in the Apocrypha. For it is not the advertised service that glorifies society. Graven on those foundations were *names of the twelve apostles*—the missionary men—sent unknown to life and death and ever going where sent. What made the stones so precious was their mason's mark upon them—not the architecture, not the profits but the labour. Public libraries, built of imperial marble, rivalled the palaces of the Cæsars. Schools and universities were the home for every mind. Here was a living and zealous democracy, achieved in Christ.

Not, however, in buildings was the city chiefly splendid, but in its public opinion. It was *holy. The glory of it was not itself but of God.* So ended the Jingoism that exalts the community at expense of mankind. And instead you had *the light, clear as crystal.* Such courtesy—such absolute sincerity! John's first glimpse of God's throne had been *as a jasper stone,* clear yet varied. And *the light most precious* in the city of God is also compared with jasper, as if society, looking into the Eternal, had, like some tranquil lake, reflected the very depths of the sky above. As John regarded this wondrous illumination, the more and more did it amaze him. You can hear him "thinking aloud" over the phenomenon. *"It is not,"* he says, *"of the sun and moon"*—being somehow independent of seasons and circumstances—*"nor is there night"*—for ignorance and vice and prejudice have vanished—*nor is there a candle that men burn*—it is no artificial creed or device for attaining happiness—*it must be the glory of the Lord that lightens this city and the Lamb that is the light therof.* At last, the Redeemer is found to be the Light of the World, following Whom none walk in darkness, be it of doubt or despair, of hatred or sin.

CHAPTER XXVIII
HOW CHRIST WOULD GOVERN

AND there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious:

And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates.

* * * * * * *

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal.

And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits.

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And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones.

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And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

And I saw no temple therein:

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And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it:

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And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.

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In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner* of fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

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And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.

—REVELATION 21:9–22:5.

XXVIII

HOW CHRIST WOULD GOVERN

NURTURED from babyhood in politics, I have watched the game, first in my own land, then in others, for forty years, and have seen how futile oftentimes are these efforts, how barren these careers and controversies; whence I can well understand why John of Patmos could only imagine the new Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, where human happiness is at last attained, as *a city set on an exceeding great and high mountain.* He came of a race which often dwells like Lot in cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrha, which often yearns for the leeks and garlic of the Nile Valley, yet has ever lifted up the eyes unto the hills whence cometh help,—unto Sinai, for a law based upon divine justice not upon selfish interest—unto Moriah, for redemption—unto Olivet, for a Holy Spirit—unto Calvary, for sacrifice—unto Carmel, for prophetic fire—and even for heresy, unto Gerizim. On a mountain did Christ proclaim the Golden Rule; on mountains was He tempted, did He pray, and stand transfigured. Except on the mountain, there can be no city of God. As long as men dwell in the valley of the shadow of death, amid mists of prejudice, fumes of passion, clouds of selfishness, they cannot see the city. The new Jerusalem is on a mountain, exceeding great and high; at the top of that mountain, there is plenty of room, but we must first reach the top. If we would

climb the mountain, there are burdens of wealth, of luxury, of display, of ambition, of hatred, of sin, of an uneasy conscience, of unrighted wrongs and resisted rights, which must be left behind. The mountain belongs to Christ alone and if we are to be part of it, so must we also belong to Him.

No More Sea.

The Promised Land was, perhaps, the only country that built its capital city on the summit of its mountains. Like the Jordan where Christ was baptized, which disappears in the depths of the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, on the heights, is a miracle of geography, unique, as was the Christ there slain. At eventide, in Jerusalem, the eye turns westwards and can catch a glimpse of the Mediterranean, glowing under the sun that sets. What, then, was John's wonder, when, in his mingled memories and dreams, he looked for the ocean and had to exclaim, *There is no more sea.* To him, that sea meant the undiscovered. In religion, it was heathendom. In politics, it was barbarism. In travel, it was danger. In friendship, it was the parting. In race, it was the Gentiles. So interpreted, how fast the sea is drying up. Nearly all the world is discovered. Nearly all the world faces the Christ. Nearly all the world is acquiring a culture. Travel was never safer nor so rapid. You cross the broadest ocean, dry-shod, in an airship. You talk from shore to shore by telephone. And there are soon to be no Gentiles. In India, the Jewish Scriptures are more read than any other literature. Everywhere arises the spiritual Israel. The world grows smaller—becomes in very truth like one big city.

The old Jerusalem was conquered, embellished, occu-

pied by one race, chosen from the families of mankind. It was the last word in a hallowed patriotism. The frontiers of the land were "promised"; none might go in, none might go out except by a sacrilege. Against Egypt on the one hand, against Babylon and Damascus and Nineveh and Tyre on the other, there was ordained a Monroe Doctrine and the aim of statesmen, the command of prophets was a splendid isolation—a hundred per cent. Judaism. What *la Patrie* is to the Frenchman, what the Fatherland is to the German, what the Stars and Stripes are to the American and the Union Jack to the British, that was Mount Zion to the Hebrews. Never was there so pure, so exalted a nationalism. It was ancient and distinct as the Irish, persistent as the Armenian, poetic as the Greek. It was free in the main from the aggressive impulse and content with a spiritual claim on its sons, dispersed abroad. Yet the nationalism was not enough. And, scattered in all lands, the Jews have dwelt, the only nation without a country, an ethnic miracle among miracles, once more mysterious and unique.

But, in the providence of the Almighty, this city of Jerusalem lay at the very centre of the world's converging trade routes. Palestine was a land that could not live unto itself—the Sinn Fein life—and destiny forced it to be international. *It shall come to pass in the last days,* wrote Isaiah, *that the mountain of the Lord shall be established and all nations shall flow unto it.* Assume a tunnel from Dover to Calais, across the English Channel, and it will be possible for two men to start, the one from Aberdeen in Scotland and the other from Vladivostock, on the far coasts of Siberia, and meet by railway at Jerusalem, thence proceeding by continuous route to Cape Town. *It shall come to*

pass. From the city of an exclusive faith and tradition and patriotism, Jerusalem has become the evident proof in bricks and mortar that all the world is one,—bound together by ties of diplomacy, commerce, thought, finance, travel.

The Gates of the City.

To John of Patmos belongs the peculiar glory of realizing what this would mean for all mankind. Here was a city, trodden under foot of Gentiles, yet he who as a Jew had worshipped within her now ruined temple, uttered not a word of revenge, appealed by no hint for reconquest. The only Jerusalem that John now desired was,—in Christ, Who received the very spear at His heart,—a city of welcome—even for the very nations that had besieged her—a city of glorious surrender to all who would invade her. *The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day and there shall be no night there.* North, south, east and west did those gates adorn the walls—*north* for the stern and capable man of affairs; the Scotsman; the eager and efficient Canadian—*south,* for the easier nature of a warmer climate, the Latin, the negro, the Hindu—*east,* for the dreamer and poet and mystic—*west,* for the inventor, the pioneer, the discoverer—so universal was to be the immigration. All the temperaments are invited into the new Jerusalem, all are there needed, and he that cometh will be in no wise cast out.

The city, says John, *lieth four square,*—that is, symmetrical, devoid of unfair privileges, equally accessible to all races, not a city for whites rather than blacks, nor for English rather than Germans, nor for Europeans rather than Asiatics. But the city is not all gate. If the walls are broad and comprehensive, they are

also not less high and unscaleable. At the narrow gate, you must enter by your appointed path. You cannot climb up another way, like a thief and a robber. Many as are the gates, all are equally honourable. There is not a diamond gate for dukes and a wooden gate for dustmen, not a servants' door one side and a door for visitors on the other. All the gates are similar, each to the other, for all are of *pearl.* The beauty of holiness is to be at last the glory of democracy. Our Saviour used to say that the kingdom of happiness is as a merchantman seeking such pearls who, finding one of great price, sells all that he hath to possess himself of it. Of all jewels, the pearl is the humblest, being created not in the fiery depths of eternal rock, but in a modest oyster, deaf and dumb and blind, yet doing His will Who makes us all. It is the grain of sand in the irritated mollusc that gathers around itself the sheen of the pearl, made perfect through tribulation. One's work in life, one's pain to be borne, one's duty to be done, one's help to be rendered,—that is the gate of pearl—that is the merchantman's prize. And by none other can you obtain admission. Find the man with a waterpot on his shoulder,—follow him, you apostles—and he will lead you to the upper room in the city of God, where sups the Christ with those who love Him.

Kings as Citizens.

Here we have, then, an entirely new idea of what kind of men and women may hope to be happy. Whereas we have put our trust hitherto in princes and statesmen and scientists, we find that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of

the world to confound the wise lest any mere flesh should glory in His presence. If *the kings of the earth,* whether of territory or of wealth or of knowledge, come to the city at all, it is in order *to bring their glory and honour into it.* It is to give what they have, not to display it. For in the city of happiness, the very word "kingdom" is forgotten. Even "the kingdom" of heaven is fulfilled. Kingdoms suggest loyalty, discipline, laws, authority, compulsion, of which all are necessary in the pursuit of happiness. But love is the fulfilment of the law and in the city of love there is no hint of litigation. In service of one another, men reach the perfect freedom. They are not conscious that they *have* to do what is right. They want to do it. In doing their duty, *they shall reign for ever and ever,* and with a power, derived direct from *the throne of God and of the Lamb.* Each personal and each national impulse assists the rest, all things working together for good to them that love God. From the obedience of myriad hearts is thus woven the harmonious texture of myriad lives.

The Golden Streets.

Of metals, but one is mentioned and that one the most precious—gold. This is to be the golden age. Since the birth of their race, when Rebekah was won for Isaac with bracelets of gold, the Jews have ever been allured by bullion. It was of gold that they have ever spoiled their oppressors, whether Egyptian or of any other race; it was gold that tempted Achan to the doom of death; Gehazi to leprosy; Ananias and Sapphira to a fatal stroke and Judas Iscariot to suicide. The love of money was thus the root of all evil—they could not serve both God and Mammon. Left with

gold in their pockets, they reared a calf thereof and worshipped it,—that calf a perfect symbol of wealth without brains or objective, a creature fit only to be led to the slaughter, even by those calculating sycophants who bow down to gold, as long as gold lasts. Hence the appeal by Moses that gold be contributed to the tabernacle, for social adornment rather than personal,—suggesting that even if no practical end be served, it is better to use wealth for worship than to waste wealth in indulgence.

With the temple swept away and the very idea of it merged in the broader conception of a city, John of Patmos had to think out what should be done with the gold. Candlesticks and altars were no longer needed and Our Saviour had shown how you may do His Will, in His strength, without ever touching money at all, for in His possession no coin was ever discovered. John had thus to assume, either that gold should be left outside the city, as an evil thing, or only used in the city for the good of everybody. If he excluded gold,—wrote a blue law against its use—why not also exclude jewels—chrysolite and the topaz and the jacinth? Why have anything beautiful in the ideal society? Not in any such sense was John a Puritan. Beauty was to him a thing, not to be abolished, but to be shared. *He used gold to pave the heavenly streets* and nobody tore up the pavement to fill their pockets.

Henceforth, the value of wealth was to be simply that human life which wealth sustains and supports. Not in Karl Marx will men ever reach this result but only in Christ, and better far is a truly Christian millionaire than a Socialist, however sincere, who fails of Christ's spirit and consecration. But on the millionaire as on the Socialist, the claim of Christ is absolute. *I*

want, says He, *your gold to pave my streets,* and so it is coming to pass. More and more surely do we find that men invest in enterprizes that assist the community—in railways, water-power, hospitals, schools, housing, old age pensions, workmen's insurance,—a hundred other projects. The investment is essentially the same, whether it be by tax, by gift or by stocks and shares,—in all cases, the gold is laid on the streets, to be worn away under the foot of man, and renewed again by man's effort,—a currency for distributing among the community the joys of life. Walking the golden streets, friend is able to greet friend, to bear gifts the one to the other, to hurry with help, to dance with pleasure—all because the talent has been rescued at last from the napkin of a selfish ownership.

The gold is described, curiously enough, as *transparent, like glass, clear as crystal.* It is solid finance but it conceals nothing. I suppose that no single circumstance has caused the ruin of happiness more frequently than the omission of men and women to keep accurate accounts of their money, so dealing fairly with themselves and their neighbours. There is not a financial scandal that could have survived or that does survive full publication of the balance sheets involved. There is no mystery in the art of company promoting, except in so far as truth is concealed. The fact is that where the gold is welded into the fabric of public utilities and is itself clear as crystal, you cannot have graft and thieving and crooked dealing. Honesty becomes, not only the best, but the sole possible policy.

The Golden Rule.

So was the city *measured with a golden reed,*—the golden rule, as we put it—by which one loves a neigh-

bour as one loves oneself. At first, it seemed to John that the names on the gates were only the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, but he soon found that all nations were there assembling, that we are all very much of the same flesh and blood and that whatever distinctions remain are not any longer of race and religion and colour. If men are excluded, it is for quite other reasons. First, there are *the fearful,* the cowards, the moderates who will not take risks, they who hesitate to trust either God or man. Such are never happy. No woman ever respects a coward. Then there are *the unbelieving,* the people who do not want Christ to be God, risen from the dead and near them, day by day, who shrink from such company, not unconvinced merely, but unconvincible. Next, there are *the abominable,* the discourteous, the cruel, the assertive, the brutal,—people who are indifferent to whatever distress they cause, elbowing their way, as they think, to happiness, but never getting there. Proscribed, too, are *the murderers*—not only they who kill the body, but they who, in word and thought, inspire murder, who carry on bitter propaganda, one nation against another, so stirring up war and bloodshed, who say of their brother, *Raca,* thou fool, who sneer and taunt and provoke. They hope for happiness but will not thus secure it. Not the whore but *the whoremonger* comes next,—he who sacrifices another to his indulgence, caring nought for the consequences; *she* may enter heaven with Mary Magdalene, but, for him, there is no happiness. *Sorcerers* are unwelcome—people who idly suppose that some mystic cult of their own, unrevealed in Christ, can ever take Christ's place, and seldom has there been a greater volume of sorcery in the world than there is to-day. Not only the ouija

board and fortune-telling and spiritualism are abroad but astrology and all manner of mysticism—much of it Eastern, and ill-understood by Western devotees; in any event, decadent from Christ's claim and His truth. Curiosity may be thereby excited but without happiness. There is *idolatry*. We erect great buildings, write clever books, accumulate mighty fortunes, develop large Empires and Republics, and then we fall down and worship them. After the successful man in business or woman in society or actress on the stage, we run madly, not to tell them of the Christ Who would save them from falling into the abysses of disillusionment, but to offer them a praise which by right is His alone. Suppose that we do thus secure entrance into a charmed circle of "the best people," are we or are they the happier? Not one whit. We give nothing and we get nothing.

Liars too are barred—indeed, *whatsoever maketh a lie.* There are people who act as if you could, as it were, diddle the world into happiness. They would fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time and they are only sorry to find that they cannot fool all of the people all of the time. Christ is not only love—He is truth, and in His city it will be truth that makes folk free. No secret commissions, no secret treaties, no secret sins, no secret advantages will be permitted. They shall not be *in any wise* possible. *The Lamb's book of life,* where is written whatever happens to each of us, will be open for public inspection, like the records of mortgages in a public file.

For what Christ came to save the world from was the bad and the hard times, instead of which He would give us the good time, not for a few to enjoy but for

all, a time of joy and of peace, with no spoil-sports; and this means a living healthy respondent soul within us. The fearful and unbelieving and the rest of them cannot share the good time because they are killing not the body alone, but this same soul,—*which is the second death.* There are men with everything that they want who are yet dead to happiness and there are men who lack everything that others want who are happy all the day long. The fate of losing one's soul was the one fate that appalled the Christ. Don't trouble, said He, about those who kill the body,—they do not matter—but him who destroys both body and soul in hell—*him fear.*

The Lake of Fire.

The building of God's city does not abolish *the lake of fire.* It is of the nature of a city that it should not fill all space, but should be somewhere for men to gather out of space, leaving space behind. John's final conception, therefore, was of a city surrounded by outer darkness, which included a lake of fire in the general scheme of things. A lake is where people drown. They swim about but cannot escape. A fiery lake means pain, even when swimming. This terrible image means, therefore, an unredeemed memory, burning with unalleviated remorse. That is hell. And it is obvious that they who pursue wickedness have *their part* there. It cannot be otherwise. It is not that they are locked out of the City of God—not at all. The gates of the city are never shut, not by day, not by night if night there were. It is that in their wickedness, some would actually prefer the alternative. So clear is to be their choice that throughout the descriptions, Christ is not mentioned once, except as the

Lamb, as the Saviour Who died, Whose sacrifice is available, Whose blood cleanses. The Lake of Fire is simply a state of persistent rebellion against utter Love. The hotter the lake, the more inviting would seem to be the open portals of the city.

No More Curse.

For there comes a time when they who follow the Christ are entitled to choose their own company. If they have offered Him to others, in all His fullness, there is no more that they can offer. We must insist ultimately that in society—the new Eden in which civilization supersedes the innocence of barbarism—*there shall be no more curse.* Had Christ not died and risen, cruel would be the edict, but the fact is that He *has* given life and they who will not have it, are thus without excuse. To John of Patmos was shown *a pure river of the water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.* To one who had lived in the old Jerusalem where water was stored in cisterns for sparing use, such imagery awakened distant echoes of the old time, and, of course, it is with the lake of fire, stagnant and sulphurous, that we have to contrast the flowing river. Happiness never broods over the past, nor nurses wrongs, but takes life, moment by moment, as life comes, dipping a bucket into the flowing stream of each day's events and duties and so drawing the draught of clear water that cools and revives the spirit. That stream which was once communion with Christ alone is now a communion with all mankind.

The Tree of Life.

Here then is a new Garden of Eden, secured to us

not by ignorance of good and evil, but by full knowledge thereof of every sin confessed, every disease diagnosed, every throb of agony shared. And the good is driving out—is overcoming the evil. The dreadful maladies are not spreading but are healed. For as the water of life flows through the city, there rises *a tree of life,* a permanent and developing result of good living, a splendid institution in the very street of the city, with roots that cling, as it were, to the river,—an administration broad based upon sympathy with the people's needs. For every month of the year, this tree bears a suitable fruit. Is there poverty? Is there sickness? Is there decrepitude? *The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.* Somehow the Christ-City deals in Christ's spirit with sorrow and grievances and whatever needs adjustment. Be the season cold or hot, rain or fine, there is a care by the many for the troubles of the few.

For the open secret of the city is no more and no less than the acknowledged presence therein of the Christ Himself. The citizens, as they go about their work and their play, *see His face,* know at once of what He would disapprove, and why, and treating Him ever as honourable company, respect His feeling, as of any one else at a hospitable board. Hence it is that *in their foreheads is graven His name.* As He comes among us, slowly but surely disappears the old mark of the beast,—the cruelties of commerce, the slaveries of civilization, the vices, the selfishness of fashion. In His personality, there is a power that impresses itself irresistibly upon all who look upon Him.

CHAPTER XXIX

JOHN OF PATMOS AWAKES

AND I John saw these things, and heard *them.* And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

And behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* th bright and morning star.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

—REVELATION 22:8–21.

XXIX

JOHN OF PATMOS AWAKES

I COME now to the end of my task, of which little remains except to tell what help I have had, in these dark days, from St. John the Divine, as he awakens at last from his long and wonderful trance. There are so many whose ideals have been shattered into dust, whose enthusiasm for good has been poisoned by cynicism, whose hopes have been deferred and their faith lost, in God and in man, that I like to know of this John also, who, after dreaming, had in like manner to return to earth, and there find himself, not in any new Jerusalem, but still in the obscure little island of Patmos, surrounded on every side by the unescapable tyranny of circumstances and maintaining those sad salt-mines where drudgery broke the spirits and blinded the eyes of the workers. The walls of the holy city and the gates of pearl and the streets of gold and the tree of life which had seemed so real faded away like a mirage and in the dull clatter of the cold dawn's duties, the music of the harps of heaven was drowned. What a contrast to Zion, the Bride of Christ, all glorious and radiant, was that rotting Roman Empire, that desolate homeland of Galilee and Judea, the weariness of John's old age, the collapse of his personal ambition!

We are not told in so many words that he woke up but we *feel* it, as we read his short disconnected sentences, now ecstatic—*Come, Lord Jesus;* now despondent—*he that is filthy let him be filthy still;* and then again reminiscent, as when he murmurs to himself

about *the river of life* and *the tree.* It was as if he could not quite believe that he was really and truly back in the old world again, and as the fact was forced on him, it came as a shock,—that perverse world, so far from the Christ, so heedless of Him, which would neither read nor hear nor obey the Good News. For a moment, he who had written of the patience of the saints, himself seemed almost to display impatience. *Well then,* he cried, *let him that is unjust be unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still*—which was strange language from an Apostle to whom God was love. Here in Patmos, you had, as it appeared, the first of the Calvinists, to whose mind the eternal God, as Alpha and Omega, predestined for every man his inevitable fate. No place for repentance is mentioned, for a change of mind, a new birth in Our Lord, the miracle of a transformed life and character. No account is taken of the fact that, as yet, few of the multi-millions of mankind had even heard Christ's name, that His Cause was but a century old, and His Missions, in their infancy. Had John's words stood alone, the Faith would have been strangled in its cradle and the Church would have been limited to a few select souls.

Yet this hard saying of John was none the less God's Truth. It comes from the very lips of the Almighty and is based on the ancient wisdom of him who wrote the Book of Proverbs. He taught that if we "refuse" when the Father "calls," then the time will certainly come when we will "call," only to wait in vain for the Father's answer. Jesus Himself has said the same. Not every one who in the great day greets Him as "Lord Lord" will be accepted by Him as friend

and follower. It is so easy to be a Christian when Christ has gained the day. It is so splendid to be a Christian when Christ has nobody except yourself. When John says to the filthy that they may be filthy still, what he means is that there is no compulsory service of Jesus Christ. You must make Him your choice. The State may, for its own sake, prohibit evil, turning out *the dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.* That is the law. It is the rule of force. But in Christ, it is only a case of *Whosoever Will.* If a man prefers to be wicked, let him prefer it. If he does not want to come to church, it is his eternal loss. Better an empty church than a church that offers the Christ, with an apology, with inducements, as if the Christ were not enough.

Just Brother So and So.

As John aroused himself from so deep a slumber, he became curiously conscious of *the angel who had shewed him* the new Jerusalem. So actual had been the vision that he would say to himself, *To think that I, John, saw these things and heard them!* Half awake, he flung himself at the feet of the angel who had been his guide in the dream and then heard a voice, strangely familiar, just Brother So-and-So, who cared for him in his infirm old age, and said to him gently, *See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this Book; Worship God.* And so did it dawn on John's mind that, after all, even angels are only messengers or missionaries, that a man's angel may be his valet, that an apostle's angel may be he who tends him in his infirmity.

If it had not been for that unknown disciple of Patmos, we should never have had the Book of Revelation. He it was who assured John that the Vision was *faithful and true* and that it was intended not for one favoured prophet but for all servants of the Lamb. He it was who urged John to *write* what he had seen and heard. Get the Vision to the people, in language that they can understand; *don't seal up the sayings of the prophecy of this book;* don't frighten away the disciples with your clamour of interpretation, or regard the Vision as if it were merely intended for you, as an individual, to hear and see. *The time is at hand*—these things, here foretold, are actually occurring. In the morning's newspapers, you find the Beasts and the Dragons and the Lamb on the Mount. It is the very time of times in which to be alive. It means that every hour of every day, the Great Event, to which the whole creation moves, is developing throughout the universe. In His own way, at His own season, over His own kingdom, the Christ is coming to reign.

Look—I Come Quickly.

As the Vision faded away and Patmos rose again in the foreground of life, John discovered himself no longer alone. Let the City of God vanish into a dim Future; Christ was here in the Present, speaking in His First Person, and giving His own counsel, just as of old. Before He died, He had said to John, *"I will come again and receive you unto myself,"* and now He says, *"Behold—Look—I come quickly. It is I Who sent the angel to testify these things in the churches. It is I Who am the root and offspring of David—the bright and morning star." Let there be chaos,* let there be reconstruction,—through reconstruction and chaos,

I am the Risen Christ. Let criticism reduce King David to a petty princeling, I am his root and offspring,—his Creator and his Descendent—his God and his Son. Let science discover stars of unimaginable number, distance and magnitude. None are so bright as the rays of hope and love and joy with which I, the Light of the World, illuminate the myriad hearts that are my own.

Wandering in the streets of the holy city, John was the idealist, dreaming of the perfect society, enraptured with its details, forgetful that not one stone had been laid as yet, except the foundations, far below the surface of things. But now, with the city out of mind, he discovered how much more than any city is a friend in need. When for the third time, the Lord said, *"Surely, I come quickly,"* John answered at once, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* One truth, at least, about the coming of the Christ is that He is ever ready to be where He is welcome. Christ will stand for office in any election where He is the only candidate and will accept responsibility for ruling any country where He alone is king. But there is no man, no teacher, however illustrious, with whom He is ready to enter into competition. Since society chose Barabbas, by unanimous plebiscite, Christ the Ascended waits until, by unanimous plebiscite, society reverses the decision. He comes, not to argue and persuade and pardon, but to reign. And He will only come again, where He can reign.

Hence it was that John, moved from his Calvinism by the intimate companionship of the Christ, recalled his favourite Isaiah who had cried, in rough eagerness, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,* and had promised to all who thus came that the

Lord would *abundantly pardon.* Glorious to John as was the prospect of the Christ's second coming to men, as we are accustomed to call it, what impressed him in the meantime was the first coming of men to the Christ. Until there are citizens, there can be no city. Until there are righteous hearts, there can be no righteous institutions. The happiness of homes is neither more nor less than but precisely equal to the happiness of those who are included therein. Contend as you like about the topics which fill the Apocalypse,—women's rights, fashion, commerce, war, conquest, churches, social reforms, disease—and you will find at the end of it all that you get nowhere in the pursuit of happiness, except as you draw, consciously or unconsciously, near to the Christ. *The Spirit,* writes John, *and the Bride say, Come,* and it is so. Over the world, torn and restless, there is in the very air we breathe a Presence, inviting us to the Christ. Of the Bible, we may have forgotten everything, or never have known save little, but of the Man of Galilee and Calvary and Olivet, we are somehow observant. Of Him, we may read hardly a word, but none the less He is there. It is true that the Bride also says, Come; the churches invite us; but this strange pervading Spirit depends not on the churches, nor is confined to them. It blows where it listeth and we hear the sound thereof. It is a whisper—*Come*—find Him again—grip Him—make Him your own.

While the Spirit thus calls, it is the duty also of the Bride to echo the call, to hug no joy to mere self, but to share the Christ with all who will receive Him. *Let him that heareth say come.* Throw open the doors of the sanctuary—multiply the seats around the table of the Lord—make welcome the sons and daughters

of poverty and shame—lecture them not—drop your problems—give, give the Christ. Compared with Him, what matters your eloquence? He is not incarnate rhetoric. He is life and food and drink and love and joy.

Know you nothing of the Spirit? Care you nothing for the Bride? Hear you nothing of the Voice? Be it so. There are people, deaf, dumb, blind, who still have need, and of them also, John writes. *Let him that is athirst,* says he, *let him come too.* Even for the uninvited guest, there is in Christ a place prepared. To Him, you may come, without note or card to introduce you. At His royal *levee,* the only etiquette is your parched and hungry nature. Let prelates don their mitres and priests their vestments, let churches organize and let organs peal forth anthems, let choirs sing their psalms and acolytes swing their censers, but John says unto you, whether or not you attend this or any other ceremonial, that *whosoever will may take the water of life freely.* Not the water of religion, not the wine of wealth, but the water of life, now and forever more, that flows always, and includes all things, in the Christ Who is all in all. Dwell you where you may, in riches or poverty, in sickness or health, under Russian or British or Indian or American or French or African skies,—wherever you dwell, on farm, in tenement, aboard ship,—the river of life flows at your feet and you may take of the water, humbly stooping, as much as your hands will hold. It is a river, infinitely abundant, the only limit being your little pannikin.

So, as John contemplated those seven struggling churches in Asia, did he find that more than any church did the Christ love the loneliest of His disciples.

So did he pass through time and eternity only to find himself at the end of it all once more with the same, now familiar Friend. Did he ascend into heaven, did he fathom the depths of hell, did he fly with angels through infinite spaces and stand in awe at sight of an eternal throne, it mattered not, for through it all, he heard the voice of the Christ, and from the love of Christ, nothing, be it beast or dragon or devil or distance, be it fire or plague or war or revolution, nothing, I say, could separate him. Test him with heresy, test him with politics, test him with kingcraft, test him with commerce, test him with luxury, test him with terrors, and from all the tests, he emerges a man of Christ.

And thus was it that he won the right to add unto us his benediction—*The gift of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* We leave this good man praying, not for any particular church, but for his brothers and sisters everywhere and at every time, that they all may have the gift, that they all may be as truly in Christ as was St. John the Divine himself. Not that the Christ should be *mine* alone, a Catholic Christ or a Protestant Christ, or an English-speaking Christ, but that, ye millions of Moslems and Jews and Confucians and Buddhists, this same Redeemer should be *ours*—yours and mine together—a Trinity in Unity—divine as *Lord,* human as *Jesus,* and anointed with the Spirit as *Christ*—to be received thus in His complete dignity and power, a gift unsearchable and by no means to be restricted. So rings out this benediction from the defeated apostle of Patmos and the whole world will one day bow the head and bend the knee as the voice of many waters answers, *Amen*—So be it—Christ, in Love, *our Fate.*

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